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SUMMARY

**WAL-MART TO LAUNCH OWN
MOBILE PAY SYSTEM**



22

**STAR WARS:
THE FORCE AWAKENS.
THE SCI-FI SAGA
STRIKES BACK**



64

**YAHOO FACING
MORE PRESSURE
FROM FRUSTRATED
SHAREHOLDERS**



58

**ALL HAIL THE
'REAL LIFE'
STAR WARS
BB-8**



32

HOBOKEN CELEBRATES FRANK SINATRA'S 100TH BIRTHDAY 06

WHY BITCOIN'S FOUNDER MATTERS, AS SPOTLIGHT HITS AUSTRALIAN 14

MORE TELECOMS LET YOU WATCH VIDEO WITHOUT DINGING DATA CAPS 52

SEATTLE TO DECIDE WHETHER TO LET UBER, LYFT DRIVERS UNIONIZE 90

AT LAST, LOVEMAKING FOR SHELDON, AMY ON 'BIG BANG THEORY' 96

CHINA'S ALIBABA PAYS \$266M FOR INFLUENTIAL HK NEWSPAPER 106

BRITISH ASTRONAUT HOPES TO SEE NEW STAR WARS MOVIE IN SPACE 110

WITH 'FORCE AWAKENS' LOOMING, 'HEART OF THE SEA' SINKS 132

SIRI VS CORTANA VS 'OK GOOGLE': WHO'S BETTER, WHO'S BEST 140

IN TECH: AI RESEARCH CENTER, ANDROID PAY, ONEDRIVE STORAGE 148

BRITISH POLICE ARREST 21-YEAR-OLD MAN IN VTECH HACKING 158

QUALCOMM DECIDES AGAINST BREAKING ITSELF UP 162

HEALTH: WHO'S TOO OLD FOR MAJOR TREATMENT? AGE NOT ALWAYS A BARRIER 164

SCIENCE: NOW COMES THE TOUGH PART: THE WORLD'S CARBON DIET STARTS 174

NASA WANT AD: ASTRONAUTS NEEDED TO HELP GET TO MARS 194

SAMSUNG ASKS SUPREME COURT TO THROW OUT \$399M JUDGMENT 198

Columns

TOP 10 APPS 112

iTUNES REVIEW 116

TOP 10 SONGS 184

TOP 10 ALBUMS 186

TOP 10 MUSIC VIDEOS 188

TOP 10 TV SHOWS 190

TOP 10 BOOKS 192

HOBOKEN CELEBRATES FRANK SINATRA'S 100TH BIRTHDAY



Frank Sinatra was the Chairman of the Board, Ol' Blue Eyes and The Voice. But "Slacksy O'Brien?"

That was an early nickname for Sinatra in the Hoboken neighborhood where he grew up because, as a youngster, he wore nice clothes.

Some young-at-heart residents of Hoboken raised their glasses to the award-winning singer and actor last Saturday on what would have been his 100th birthday.



A look back at a century of Sinatra:

FROM HERE TO ETERNITY

Francis Albert Sinatra was born on Dec. 12, 1915, in the Hudson River waterfront city that was home to German, Irish and Italian immigrants.

His father, Anthony, was a boxer who fought in Irish gyms as “Marty O’Brien” before becoming a firefighter and tavern owner. His mother, known as “Dolly,” was connected to the local political machine.

Even though the family initially lived in a cold-water apartment at 415 Monroe St., they eventually had such luxuries as a radio, telephone and car while his mother made sure her son had nice clothes, Hoboken Historical Museum director Robert Foster said.

START SPREADING THE NEWS

The high school dropout delivered the Jersey Observer newspaper and worked at a shipyard.

The car - and a driver’s license in which his name was misspelled SINTRA - helped gain him a spot in 1935 with the singing group the Hoboken Four. They won first prize on a national radio program for amateur entertainers.

He became a singing waiter at The Rustic Cabin in Englewood Cliffs, where he met songwriter Cole Porter, and forgot the words to Porter’s hit, “Night And Day,” the 100 Sinatra website said.

Radio led Sinatra to big bands and stardom.





STRANGERS IN THE NIGHT

Sinatra offered his assistance to the FBI in 1950, according to a confidential memorandum obtained in 1998 by The Associated Press. It showed Sinatra felt there was an opportunity to “do some good for his country under the direction of the FBI.” He was “willing to do anything even if it affects his livelihood and costs him his job,” the memo said. The FBI turned down the offer.

The file also contained Sinatra’s mug shot, taken by the Bergen County Sheriff’s Office in 1938, after his arrest on a seduction charge that was later dropped.

LUCK BE A LADY

Sinatra’s Rat Pack persona is associated with Las Vegas, but he gets credit for filling Atlantic City’s casino showrooms with top talent after he appeared in 1979 at the city’s first casino, Resorts International.

Following a show at Atlantic City’s Golden Nugget in 1983, Sinatra and Dean Martin demanded a blackjack dealer break the rules, costing the casino a \$25,000 fine.

A commissioner called Sinatra “an obnoxious bully” with a “bloated ego.”

Sinatra scrapped an engagement and his lawyer issued a statement saying, “He will not perform in a state where appointed officials feel the compulsion to use him as a punching bag.”

His last engagement in Atlantic City was at the Sands in 1994.





DRINK UP, ALL YOU PEOPLE

People left flowers near the plaque where Sinatra's first home once stood when he died in 1998 at age 82. A commemorative mass will be held at St. Francis Roman Catholic Church, where Sinatra was baptized, at 6 p.m. Sunday. Whatever real or imagined slights felt by some residents were forgotten.

Sinatra was inducted in the first class of New Jersey's Hall of Fame in 2008. A park and the city's main post office bear his name.

The Postal Service in 2008 issued a 42-cent stamp with his image, taking the rare step of holding three ceremonies in Hoboken, New York and Las Vegas.

But for a saloon singer who usually had a drink on stage, Sinatra's ultimate honor came from Jack Daniel's, which introduced Sinatra Select whiskey in 2003.

To honor the 100th anniversary of Sinatra's birth, Jack Daniel's produced 100 barrels of 100-proof Sinatra Century, which retails for \$499.99 and includes an unreleased Sinatra recording.

The Hoboken Historical Museum on Saturday night sponsored a sold-out gala at Stevens Institute of Technology, according to **NJ.com**.



WMA
Frank Sinatra
1952-1953

Handwritten musical notation and lyrics on a piece of paper, including the lyrics: "I will always stay", "though you're far away", "as though you were next my side", "the next day when in my dream I find you there, dear", and "I love you, you are my love".





WHY BITCOIN'S FOUNDER MATTERS, AS SPOTLIGHT HITS AUSTRALIAN



Since the founding of the cryptocurrency Bitcoin in 2009, its inventor - or inventors - have been shrouded in mystery. For six years, that individual or group has lurked behind the pseudonym Satoshi Nakamoto and hoarded a pile of the digital currency so large it might crash the market if sold today.

The hunt for Bitcoin's secretive founder has taken a turn. The technology magazine *Wired* and the website *Gizmodo* both published investigative pieces this week that sorted through a trove of leaked (and possibly hacked) emails and documents that pointed to Craig Stephen Wright, a 44-year-old Australian bitcoin entrepreneur living in a posh suburb of Sydney.

While neither report was conclusive - no attempt at identification can be without the founder sending a message or moving bitcoins using Nakamoto's own encrypted signature, known as a PGP key - both raised startling circumstantial evidence that puts a bright spotlight on Wright.

Attempts to reach Wright on Wednesday were unsuccessful.

The hunt for Bitcoin's founder has become a cottage industry among some journalists. The chase has veered from a Finnish sociologist to a Japanese mathematician to a Japanese-American engineer, all of whom denied it - the latter after a car chase with reporters that ended at the offices of The Associated Press in Los Angeles in March 2014.

Why anyone cares boils down to three key things:

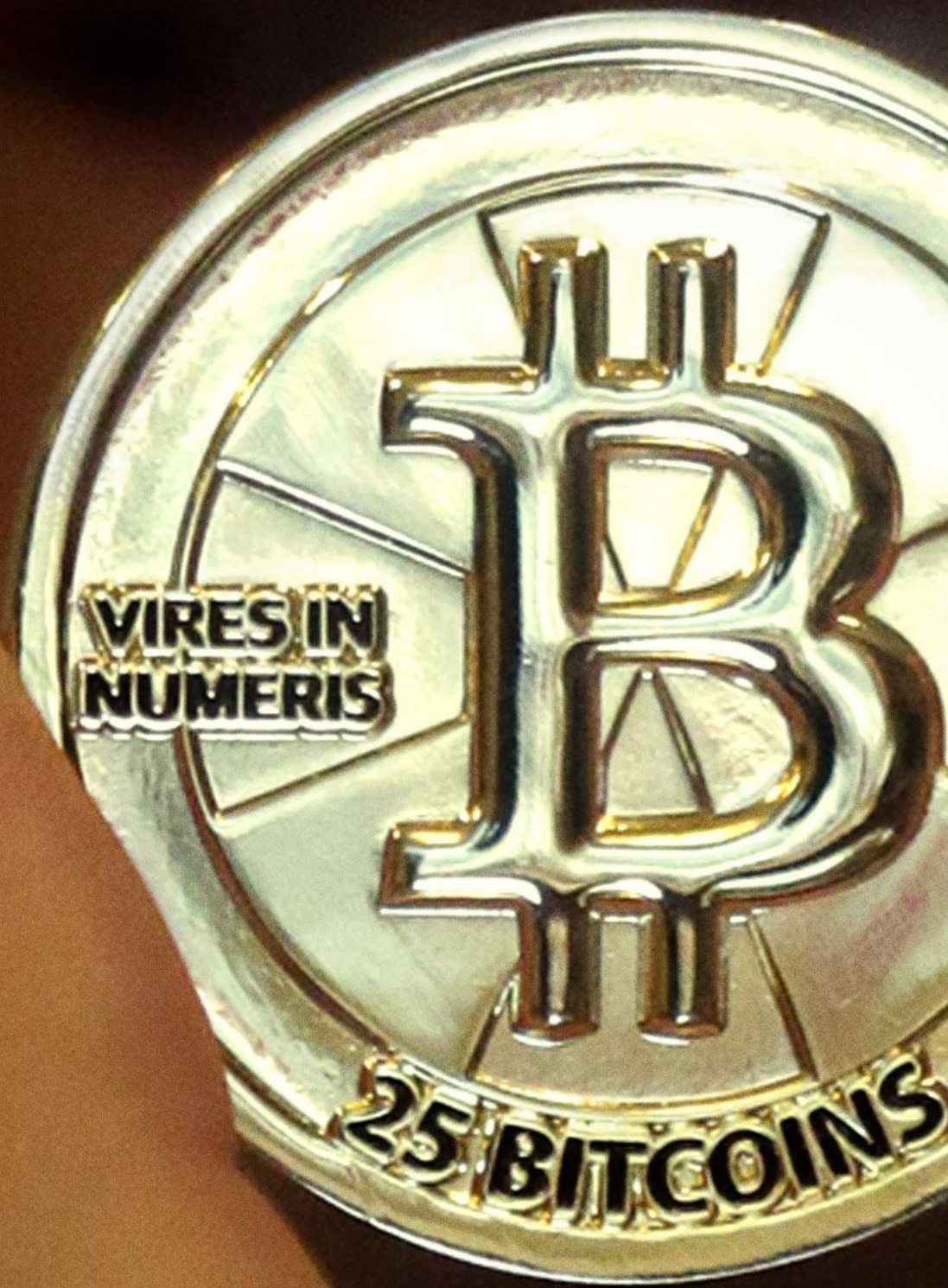
- Bitcoin is designed for secure financial transactions that require no central authority
- no banks, no government regulators. That makes it attractive to off-the-grid types such as libertarians, people who want to evade tax authorities, and criminals, even though Bitcoin doesn't guarantee anonymity, since it documents every transaction in a public forum. Still, it attracts conspiracy theorists interested in the very conspiracy that created it.

"It's part of the mystery of Bitcoin," said James Angel, associate professor of finance at Georgetown University. "Usually when people invent something really cool, they're more than happy to take credit for it. Here, we have this obsessive anonymity. You kind of wonder, 'Who is Satoshi Nakamoto?'"



Image: Jim Urquhart







- Bitcoin is still working out kinks and problems, one of which is a dispute over an arbitrary cap on the number of bitcoins transactions that are processed each day by so-called miners who keep the system running. Some advocates would like Nakamoto to re-emerge and resolve the conflict, even though the founder hasn't been involved for years.

- Nakamoto's encrypted PGP key can unlock a huge stash of bitcoins - a million or so worth more than \$400 million, accounting for about 7 percent of all bitcoins in existence. No one has touched that bitcoin hoard. Should the real Nakamoto begin cashing in those bitcoins, it could destabilize the cryptocurrency.

According to Nicholas Weaver, a researcher at the International Computer Science Institute in Berkeley, California, bitcoins are thinly traded. Only about \$1.4 million in real dollars flow into the system every day to buy the roughly 3,600 bitcoins created by "miners" who run intensive computations necessary to keep track of bitcoin transactions in exchange for new bitcoins.

"The amount of bitcoin in the early Satoshi-mined blocks would totally swamp the current demand," Weaver said, making the founder's identity crucial to faith in the system itself.

"What happens if there's someone with a million shares who you don't know, you don't know where they are, you don't know what their motives are?"

Wired, for one, couched its conclusion guardedly: "Either Wright invented bitcoin, or he's a brilliant hoaxer who very badly wants us to believe he did."



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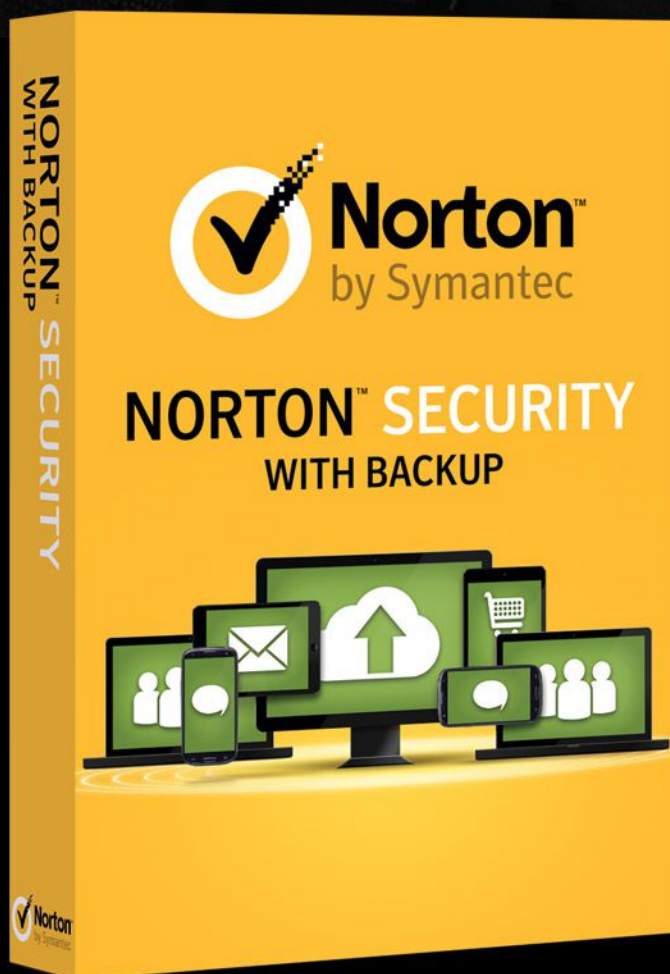
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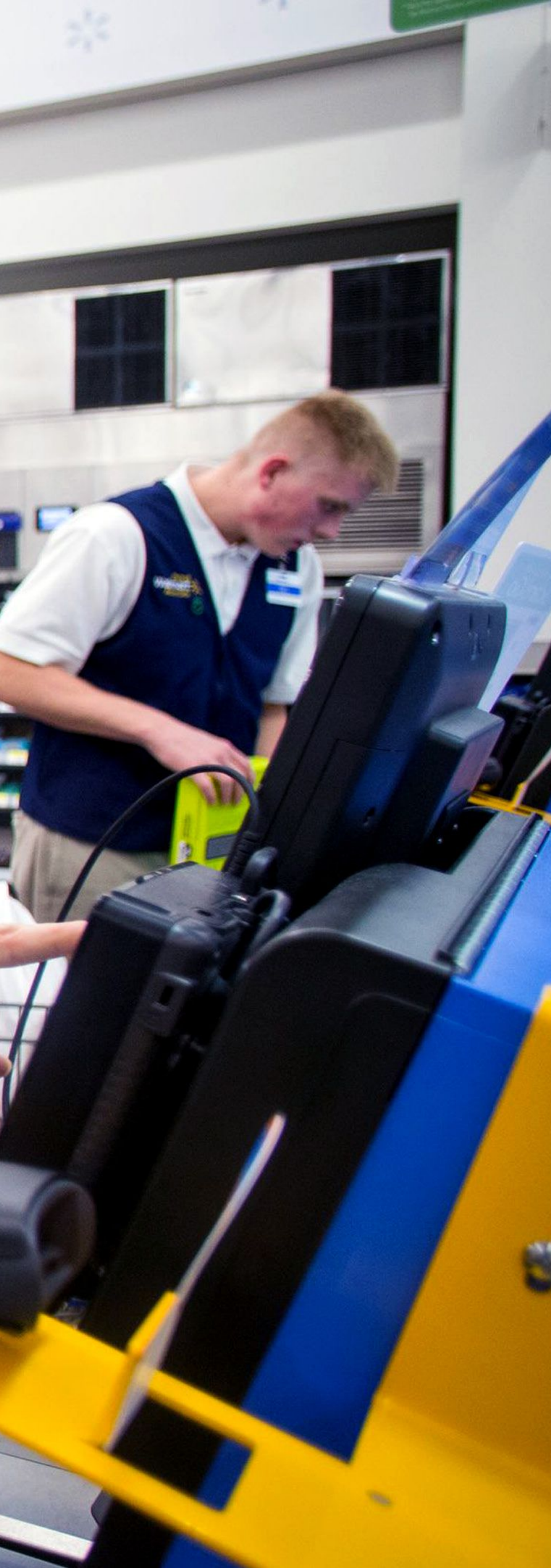
WAL-MART TO LAUNCH OWN MOBILE PAY SYSTEM

The mobile payment wars are heating up.

Wal-Mart Stores Inc., the world's largest retailer, said it's launching its own mobile payment system that will allow shoppers to pay with any major credit or debit card or its own store gift card through its existing smartphone app at the cash register.

It started testing the new payment feature Thursday at its stores in the Bentonville, Arkansas area, where the retailer is based. It plans to launch the payment system called Walmart Pay in all 4,500-plus U.S. stores in early next year.





It's part of Wal-Mart's overall mobile strategy to making shopping easier and faster, but the launch is the latest salvo in the battle for mobile payments that's in the early stages. Wal-Mart has moved into the field as Apple's one-year-old tap-and-pay system is being expanded to other merchants like Best Buy and KFC and several months after Google launched the Android Pay mobile wallet app and Samsung came out with Samsung Pay. They're all trying to get a piece of what could be a very lucrative business, but none of them have cracked the market so far.

The move signals that Walmart believes it's best to build its own system to better serve its customers, even as it backs a retail industrywide mobile payment program that is in test phase.

"We are creating a seamless shopping experience that includes payment," Neil Ashe, president and CEO of Wal-Mart's global eCommerce, told reporters on a conference call on Wednesday. "It's fast. It's simple, and it's a secure way for customers to use their smartphone."

Twenty-two million customers use the Wal-Mart app each month, and more than half of Wal-Mart's online orders are now coming from a mobile device. This holiday season, Wal-Mart added new features like allowing online shoppers to check in once they get to the parking lot so they could have their online orders ready for pickup.

Wal-Mart executives said that after evaluating various mobile options, they found that they had different constraints, working only on certain devices or payment types. Apple Pay requires iPhones. But Google's own tap-and-pay services, Android Pay and Samsung's Samsung Pay require Android phones.

However, Ashe and Daniel Eckert, Wal-Mart's senior vice president of services, told reporters the system is designed to integrate with other payment applications like Apple Pay - if the retailer decides to include them.

Wal-Mart's move could be a blow to Merchant Customer Exchange, or MCX, set up a few years ago by a consortium of retailers and restaurants to create an industrywide mobile payment system. Wal-Mart has been a key player. But Wal-Mart executives told reporters they remain excited about the MCX pilot program for the payment system called "CurrentC." A pilot test is being conducted in Columbus, Ohio, and it involves Wal-Mart and 10 other retailers.

Nevertheless, Eckert noted, "We are listening to the needs of the customer. We are looking at innovating the checkout experience and using payment to do that."

Wal-Mart's new mobile payment systems works this way: Shoppers download the Walmart app and then select a payment method. At the register, they open up the app and then they activate the camera function to scan a QR code on the reader. That connects the phone to the basket of items they're checking out. Customers can put the phone away and an e-receipt application will be sent to the app.

Mobile-payment services from Apple, Google and Samsung all rely on wireless technology called NFC. The customer merely taps the phone next to a payment machine at the store and authorizes the purchase, usually with a fingerprint ID. But it works only in stores with newer, NFC equipment. Samsung goes further in offering a backup: The phone can mimic the



Walmart 
Save money. Live better.

old-school magnetic signals produced by card swipes and work with most existing equipment.

JPMorgan Chase, meanwhile, is working on its own system for mobile payments. But Chase Pay won't use NFC when it debuts next year. Rather, it will rely on QR that can be scanned by a register.

All of these services offer security benefits: They store and transmit an alternate card number that's generated by the card issuer. The merchant never gets the real card number, so it remains safe even if the store's system gets hacked. With Wal-Mart Pay, the company says no card information is stored on the phone, but the real card number is still stored at what it says is a secure data center.

The retail consortium's CurrentC system is similar to Apple - but customers don't use a fingerprint, and it doesn't use NFC technology. Customers scan a QR code on the reader.

Apple and others have faced some challenges to change the behavior of shoppers accustomed to just taking out their wallets to pay. Technology at the stores also has not kept pace with the efforts of the like of Apple.

When Apple launched in the U.S., the U.S. had 200,000 tap-capable machines. That's expected to surpass 1.5 million this year. The growth includes about 100,000 small to medium-sized merchants each month, Apple said. Apple has said that Cinnabon will add Apple Pay to all its U.S. locations next year, while Domino's company-owned pizza stores will get it by year's end. Apple also is conducting a pilot program with Starbucks, with a broader rollout next year, while KFC will launch next spring.





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**SPHERO OFFERS
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All hail the 'real life' Star Wars BB-8



WHY THE 'BB-8 BY SPHERO' IS WORTH MAKING A FUSS ABOUT

In the year 2015, we are all used to the notion that when the latest Hollywood blockbuster comes out, it may well be accompanied by a merchandise range. But Star Wars has never really had what might be termed a 'normal' relationship with the merchandise world, **toys like the iconic Kenner figures of yesteryear having stoked expectations for every new toy release** - such as, in the case of the latest instalment, *The Force Awakens*, the BB-8 by Sphero.

Naturally, we have to explain a bit more of the background here. If you are on even the faintest nodding terms with current popular culture, we're sure that the term 'BB-8' already evokes

for you the image of the latest Star Wars droid in all of its onomatopoeic majesty, it resembling a moving white ball with a small domed, R2-D2-esque head.

It's not every day that we get a new Star Wars droid of any description, so to be able to welcome one already so effortlessly iconic is quite something, and fans will be no doubt eager to see what BB-8 gets up to on the big screen. They should certainly be impressed by the realism of its depiction, not least given *The Force Awakens*' much-decreased reliance on computer-generated imagery (CGI) in favor of the more traditional, practical special effects of the original Star Wars trilogy.







BB-8 IS 'REAL' - IN MORE WAYS THAN ONE

What that means is that the BB-8 you watch on screen will be an actual physical prop, created by Disney Research and operated live on set. Much has already been said about BB-8's design.

Special effects artist Neal Scanlan has said that the droid's differently shaped panels on each side make it easier for viewers to track the droid's movement and direction of travel than would be the case if the circumference had featured more parallel patterns.

Scanlan has even gone as far as giving us an insight into the droid's personality, commenting that "We always imagined BB-8 as being quite manipulative. I think he knows he's cute. He knows he can win people over. And he uses that like children do to get his own way. In this film, he has a very important mission that he has to accomplish and so he uses his personality, his coyness, and all of those things."

Why are we talking about all of these things? Well, it is that combination of genuine personality, subtly ingenious design and compelling technology that we expect to give BB-8 a huge amount of appeal to Star Wars fans for many years to come, and which should also - not coincidentally - make it ripe for merchandising opportunities. In keeping with the spirit of BB-8 as an actual, physical, working thing, you can even buy one, thanks to a little company known as Sphero.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT SPHERO

If you know anything at all about the company Sphero, it will immediately become obvious

to you why it was chosen for the assignment of bringing BB-8 into people's homes. The firm has become synonymous in recent years with its spherical robots that are controlled by a smartphone app, and which very much resemble naked or proto-BB-8s in their shape and function. Today, the company offers the original white polycarbonate Sphero toy and the rugged Ollie, the transparent education-oriented SPRK Edition having also recently earned plaudits.

But the creation of a convincing BB-8 toy - or technological device, remote controlled spherical robot or whatever other term you might be tempted to use - has surely been Sphero's biggest and most daunting assignment yet. That said, you can't deny the thoroughness of the company's preparation, its executives having been the first people outside the production team to be shown on-set photos and images of the droid by Disney CEO Bob Iger in July, when it was participating in a startup accelerator program run by the corporation.

The result of the collaboration has been described by Wired as "the only truly cutting-edge item" in a collection of The Force Awakens merchandise including the likes of toys, action figures, bags and luggage and household items, in which the image of BB-8 featured prominently. That some fans **have even reportedly been getting tattoos of BB-8 on various areas of their bodies suggests** that Sphero has a lot to live up to in making its 'BB-8 by Sphero' toy befitting of the legend that is already springing up around the new droid.







IMPRESSIVE SPECIFICATIONS FROM A MERE 'TOY'

So, what is the 'BB-8 by Sphero' really all about? Well, in a nutshell, it's a version of the traditional Sphero that resembles BB-8, but which you can otherwise do many of the usual Sphero-esque things with, such as using a smartphone or tablet app as a remote control to roll it across the floor. Sphero has naturally made somewhat grander claims for the BB-8 - hailing it as "the app-enabled droid that is as authentic as it is advanced", boasting "something unlike any other robot - an adaptive personality that changes as you play."

Sphero isn't just promising another remote controlled toy - it's talked of a device that shows various expressions and even perks up when it is given voice commands. We've even been told that the BB-8 can 'go on patrol' - in other words, you can leave it to explore any environment of its own accord. We're also excited about the bit in Sphero's blurb referencing the ability to "create and view holographic recordings" - and of course, if all of the above sounds a bit pretentious to you, you can also just whip your iPhone out and control it just like any old remote controlled toy.

Naturally, the BB-8 by Sphero can't offer everything that its on-screen counterpart can. It's certainly not as large as the BB-8 of cinema fame, and despite that aforementioned 'patrol' feature, no one's claiming that it will have the same intelligence and independence. The bottom line is that while it isn't a bespoke recreation of the BB-8 of the big screen for fans with money to burn, the Sphero variant's

\$150 retail price should appeal to a good mix of hardcore Star Wars collectors and those simply seeking a more sophisticated-than-normal toy.

OUR HANDS-ON VERDICT... AND IT'S A THUMBS UP

We are not unfamiliar with the charms of Sphero, having also previously tried out the SPRK Edition, so we had a decent idea of what to expect on the arrival of the box. As with the SPRK Edition, on opening it up, we weren't greeted with reams of paper instructions, but instead with some simple diagrams that helped to make clear just how self-explanatory the operation of this device really is.

The box's overall contents consist of nothing more than an induction charging base, a micro USB cable, a Quick Start guide, legal guide and - of course - the 'BB-8 App-Enabled Droid' itself, with its distinctive design and colours and durable polycarbonate shell. At a height of 11.4cm, a width of 7.3cm and a weight of 200kg - about the equivalent of a small orange - it's a nice, portable size and weight for living room play, without the worry about inadvertently knocking out or running over your cat or dog.

In case you're wondering, a combination of magnets and small wheels is used to keep the droid's head secure on its globular body, even while it's hurtling across the room. Once you've got the BB-8 out of its box, one of the first things that you will need to do is download the app to your mobile device - it's free, and there are versions available for smartphones and tablets on both iOS and Android.





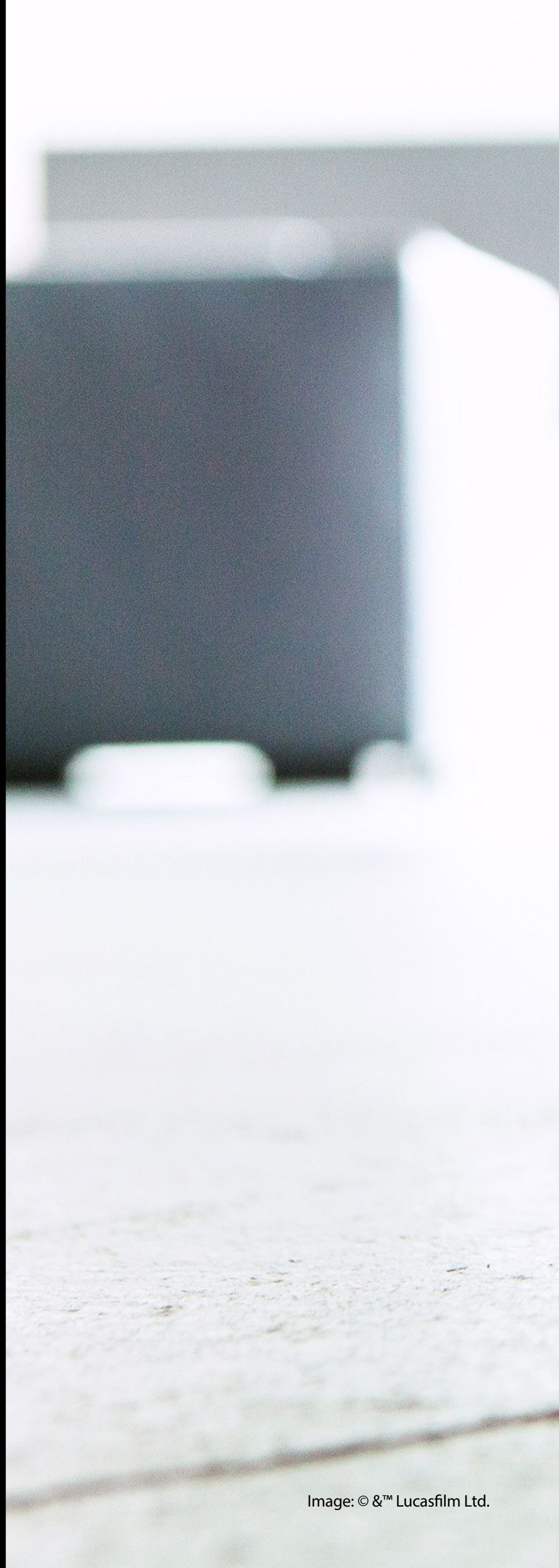
AN EXCITING - AND FAR FROM BASIC - DRIVE FUNCTION

The app's first task will pair the BB-8 to Bluetooth. Once that's done, you will be required to line up the blue light in the actual BB-8 with your own direction, the toy - once you actually start to play with it - moving in the direction where the light is pointing. You will then finally be able to actually play with it.

There are three interactive modes in the app to take advantage of - Drive, Message and Patrol, in addition to a Settings app. It is the Drive mode that we found ourselves using most often, and which we suspect you will use most often too, presenting you with a virtual directional pad - albeit, dependent on your device being held in landscape mode - with which you can control the BB-8's movement.

We found the process of controlling the BB-8 to be highly intuitive and accurate - we never found ourselves whacking it into walls that we didn't want it to whack into, for example - to such an extent that we could imagine a child easily controlling it as long as the blue light is lined up. Even if you do hit a few obstacles from time to time, the BB-8's tough shell doesn't seem to suffer any scratches as a result, at least if you keep to a reasonably slow speed. Of course, it's still possible to break plastic, so we wouldn't recommend doing anything completely foolhardy.

Basically, if you have ever played with a Sphero before, the Drive function should present you with no difficulties. This part of the app also includes options for reverse driving and a temporary speed boost, or if you tap the





BB-8 portrait, you can access a host of further instructions. You can order your BB-8 to spin around in circles, nod yes or no or conduct a square or figure-of-eight shaped 'mini patrol'.

Whatever we instructed BB-8 to do, it responded with aplomb, even moving across rugs and carpets, although moving from a smooth floor surface onto a rug was sometimes difficult when the BB-8 wasn't moving fast enough. We would also advise that you vacuum your floor before letting BB-8 loose, given its inevitable tendency to gather dirt - particularly on the underside of the dome head that is constantly in contact with different areas of the rolling body.

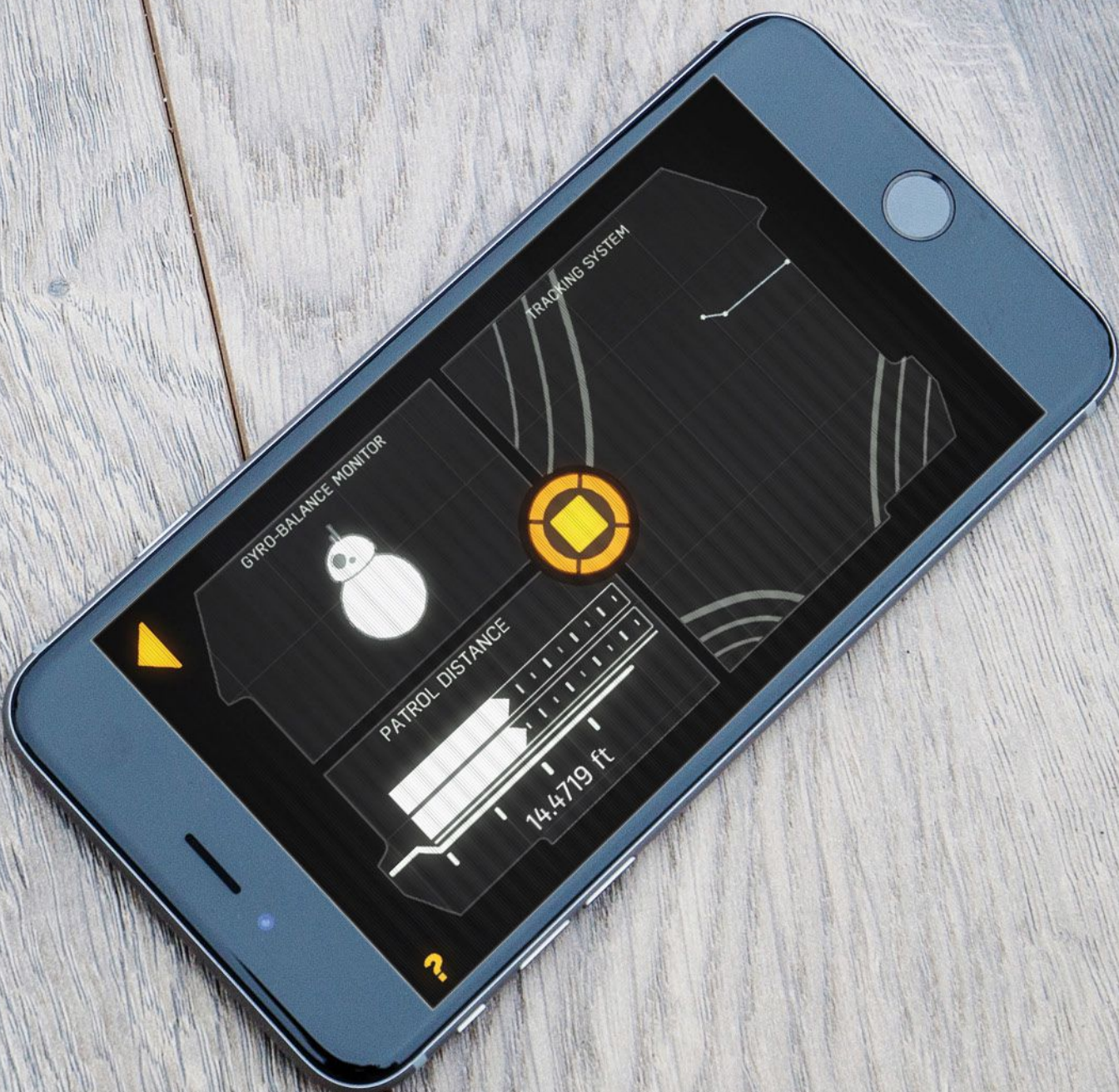
HOLOGRAPHIC MESSAGES - FAR FROM JUST A GIMMICK

You probably won't spend as much time with the other parts of the app, but that doesn't mean that they lack their own appeal. The Messages section, for instance, allows you to use your phone or tablet's front-facing camera to record a video message that is then holographically "played" by the BB-8. In practice, that means that augmented reality is used to play the message on the phone.

Recording a message might take some getting used to, given the need to do so with the device in landscape mode. However, there's no question that the resultant visual effect on playback is impressive, with the blue hologram being projected within your smartphone screen's 3D space to make it appear as if the BB-8 itself is producing it.

You can store numerous video messages locally within the smartphone app, giving you plenty





of opportunity to marvel once again at the wonders of augmented reality. Such a feature isn't a mere gimmick, included because Sphero physically "can" offer it; it has a clear link to one of the key purposes of the droids in the actual Star Wars films of **surreptitiously delivering important messages from one Jedi to another.**

WHAT IF YOU FANCY GOING 'ON PATROL'?

The Patrol app is the perfect feature for the especially lazy BB-8 user - it really is the app that you simply switch on when you want to sit back and be entertained. As the name suggests, this feature involves BB-8 going on 'patrol', moving around its space and working its way around obstacles of its own accord.

How does it do that without bumping into things, we hear you ask? Well, it most definitely does bump into things, at least at first, and will make angry noises as it does so. This is why we wouldn't advise you to set the 'Patrol' mode in a room with too many awkward nooks and crannies.





Nonetheless, as your BB-8 navigates on its own, it gradually ‘learns’ your chosen space - or rather, it is the app that builds a map of where the toy has been, complete with an event log comprising self diagnostics, proximity data and collision information. If, for instance, the BB-8 slams into a table leg, it’ll note this as an obstacle on its ‘map’, so that it doesn’t make the same mistake again.

Another wonder of the BB-8 is the ability that you have to literally speak to it via voice activation technology. You can activate voice mode simply by saying “okay, BB-8”, before barking all manner of voice commands at it. Suggested phrases include exploratory ones like “look around” and “go explore”, as well as questions such as “how do you feel?” and “what do you think?”, not to mention alerts like “it’s a trap!” and “run away!” You can even tell it to “go to sleep” or “wake up”.

We didn’t normally have problems getting this voice activation feature to work, which was a pleasant surprise, given how frustrating such functionality can be in certain other contexts.



Image: © &™ Lucasfilm Ltd.



ALREADY A FESTIVE SUCCESS STORY

All of the signs so far have indicated that the Sphero by BB-8 has been positively flying off the shelves, causing no less fuss than the latest accompanying installment of the Star Wars film saga. It even been described as one of the hottest-selling toys of the Christmas season, **for all of Sphero's reluctance to even consider it a toy.**

To be fair, the company probably shouldn't take offence at the association - after all, we are now firmly into the era of the increasing 'technologization' of even the most seemingly basic children's toys, and given the already strong involvement of Sphero in the education field, it should be no surprise if it is children who largely find the BB-8 in their stockings on December 25.

Certainly, if one is to categorize the Sphero BB-8 as a toy, there's no question that it has a formidable heritage to live up to as far as the Star Wars franchise is concerned. And, let's face it - if The Force Awakens is anywhere near as well-received as the Sphero BB-8 has already been, it will have lived up to a lot of hype in and of itself. ■

by Benjamin Kerry & Gavin Lenaghan

T-Mobile





MORE TELECOMS LET YOU WATCH VIDEO WITHOUT DINGING DATA CAPS

Cellphone and broadband providers are excluding some video from data caps, meaning consumers have more data available for other apps and services.

But that's not necessarily good, according to advocates of net neutrality, the concept that Internet access providers shouldn't discriminate against some Web traffic in favor of others. They say innovation could be curtailed if smaller video providers couldn't afford to pay for an exemption.

The exemptions come as mobile video booms. But video eats up a lot of data. On a smartphone, an hour or two of video consumes about 1 gigabyte. AT&T and Verizon, the biggest wireless companies, have been phasing out unlimited plans, so customers pay more to watch more over cellular networks.



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Even home Internet providers are testing data caps. About 13 percent of Comcast's customers are in a market with caps, according to research firm MoffettNathanson. Comcast exempts its own video, but not video from rivals like Netflix. Critics say that could hurt competition, as consumers would be drawn to the service that's exempt.

The Federal Communications Commission has adopted rules to protect net neutrality, but these exemptions aren't banned under the rules. The FCC says consumers could benefit in some cases and will address complaints as they come up.

Here's a look at what major U.S. companies are doing:

T-MOBILE

The No. 3 wireless carrier exempts major streaming music and, as of November, many popular video services from data caps on most of its plans. The company says the video providers don't have to pay for that, but do have to meet certain technical requirements. YouTube and Facebook video aren't covered; T-Mobile says it couldn't tell when those services are delivering video.

COMCAST

This fall, the cable TV giant started offering a streaming alternative, with channels delivered to customers' homes without the need for a cable box. That video - and any streaming that regular cable customers do on the company's Xfinity TV app in their homes - aren't counted toward data caps. That's because they're cable services on a "managed network," which Comcast considers separate from the public Internet, says spokeswoman Lisa Scalzo.

But in a complication for customers, she says logging into a channel's app, like HBO or ESPN, or video using another Comcast app, Xfinity TV Go, would count toward caps because data go over the public Internet.

The company used to have an Xbox app that let customers watch Comcast-supplied TV without counting toward data caps, but Comcast says the app was scrapped in late August.

AT&T

Since early 2014, the No. 2 wireless carrier has exempted some Internet services from data caps on its main wireless plans. Instead, AT&T says it has pilot agreements with a handful of businesses under its "Sponsored Data" program. On its website, AT&T lists six companies as participating, including Aquato and Syntonic, which specialize in sponsored content.

The company would not say who pays for the data that are exempted from consumers' plans under these programs.

As for AT&T's cable business, AT&T agreed not to exempt streaming of its own U-verse or DirecTV online video from its home Internet data caps in order to win FCC approval of its July purchase of DirecTV.





comcast.

VERIZON

The country's biggest wireless company has said that its mobile video service, go90, launched in October, will include sponsored content. That means Verizon customers watching that video will be exempt from data caps. Verizon will make money instead through ads. Not all go90 video will be sponsored content, though; some does count toward a data cap.

Spokeswoman Marie McGehee confirmed a Re/code report that said Verizon will soon test a sponsored-data program similar to AT&T. It would roll out more broadly next year. She declined to comment further Friday.

The company is currently running a promotion in which Verizon customers get an extra 2 gigabytes of data for three months for downloading the go90 app and registering. But you don't have to watch any video to get the deal.



YAHOO FACING MORE PRESSURE FROM FRUSTRATED SHAREHOLDERS


Yahoo is facing shareholder pressure to pursue other alternatives besides a complex spinoff of its Internet operations while CEO Marissa Mayer struggles to revive the company's revenue growth.

The demands from SpringOwl Asset Management and Canyon Capital Advisors reflect shareholders' frustration with Mayer's inability to snap the company out of a financial funk after three-and-half years on the job.

Mayer hoped to placate investors with last week's announcement of a revised spinoff, but the company's stock has slid 6 percent since then. The shares fell 32 cents to close Monday at \$32.59.

SpringOwl, a New York hedge fund, has sent a 99-page presentation to Yahoo's board that calls for the company to lay off 9,000 of its 10,700 workers and eliminate free food for employees to help save \$2 billion annually.





Canyon Capital, a Los Angeles investment firm, wants Yahoo to sell its Internet business instead of spinning it off.

Yahoo has warned the spinoff could take more than a year to complete, a time frame that Canyon Capital called “simply unacceptable” after Yahoo spent most of this year preparing to break off its \$31 billion stake in China’s Alibaba Group in an attempt to avoid paying taxes on the gains from its initial investment of \$1 billion.

Yahoo scrapped the Alibaba spinoff after another shareholder, Starboard Value, threatened an attempt to overthrow the board if the company stuck to that plan. Starboard and other investors were worried the Alibaba stake would be taxed at a cost of more than \$10 billion after the Internal Revenue Service declined to guarantee it would qualify for an exemption.

Yahoo Inc. didn’t immediately respond to requests for comment about the critiques from SpringOwl and Canyon Capital.

Now that two more shareholders expressing their dismay with Yahoo's direction, Mayer's fate could be tied to a cost-cutting reorganization that she has been working on for the past two months. Mayer, who is on a brief maternity leave after giving birth to twins last week, says the overhaul will jettison Yahoo's least profitable products - a shake-up that could lay off a large number of workers.

The details of the reorganization are supposed to be announced next month when the Sunnyvale, California, company releases its fourth-quarter earnings.

In its Dec. 11 letter to Yahoo's board, Canyon Capital indicated that Mayer already has been given too much time to turn things around.

"We do not understand the board's continued support of the company's senior management team, given its track record," Canyon Capital wrote.







A movie poster for Star Wars: The Force Awakens. The background is a fiery red and orange scene. In the upper left, a close-up of Kylo Ren's helmeted face is visible. On the right, Rey is shown from the chest up, looking intently at the viewer. She is holding a glowing yellow lightsaber. In the bottom right corner, the head of the droid BB-8 is visible. The title 'STAR WARS' is written in large, yellow, outlined letters, with 'THE FORCE AWAKENS' in smaller white letters in between.

STAR THE FORCE AWAKENS WARS

THE SCI-FI SAGA STRIKES BACK

POTENTIALLY THE NEW BIGGEST MOVIE IN HISTORY



It's that time again. Even as you're only a few words into reading this article, that familiar John Williams score is probably bouncing around in your head, heralding the return of easily the most renowned space opera of all time. We are, of course, talking about Star Wars - and the franchise's new theatrical installment, *The Force Awakens*, could turn out to be by far the most popular yet.

But hang on a moment... haven't we been down this route before? If you were one of the millions of Star Wars followers back in 1999, yes. *The Phantom Menace*, originally touted as the galactic series' big comeback near the turn of the millennium, has been filed in the cabinet drawer of big screen history as a crushing disappointment. But there's been plenty of personnel changes since then - and, more excitingly, returns for some (very) old friends. Welcome home - we've all missed you...

WALT A TURNAROUND FOR STAR WARS AND DISNEY

That the franchise is now in the ownership of Walt Disney Pictures is hugely ironic, given that the same studio **rejected the rights to the original film back in the 1970s**, several years before it was released and became an instantly recognizable pop culture phenomenon. Disney still doesn't have any rights to that particular movie, those rights having been omitted from the \$4 billion acquisition of LucasFilm that, in 2012, saw much Star Wars past and its foreseeable future join Walt's legendary stable.

However, by the time the studio put pen to paper on the LucasFilm deal, it couldn't have



Image: David James © Lucasfilm Ltd.



enjoyed a clearer idea of what it was getting. The first two film sequels, 1980's *The Empire Strikes Back* and 1983's *Return of the Jedi*, also attracted strong acclaim; and, despite the more mixed critical and public reaction to the prequel trilogy of 1999's *The Phantom Menace*, 2002's *Attack of the Clones* and 2005's *Revenge of the Sith*, Star Wars is today **the world's fifth highest-grossing film series.**

A LONG TIME AGO IN THEATERS FAR, FAR AWAY...

Of course, even the most earth-dominating pop culture phenomena have had modest beginnings - and this was very much the case with Star Wars. Reportedly, Lucas **had the idea of filming a space fantasy as long ago as 1971**, and went ahead with writing the first film after failing to obtain the rights to make a Flash Gordon movie. The inspiration behind Flash Gordon went on to inspire the first Star Wars script, which Lucas kept busy with writing from January 1973 until March 1976, when shooting for that script finally commenced.

Upon its theatrical release in 1977, the original film became what was later described by Ben Burt, who oversaw its dialogue and sound effects, as **the first "summer special effects blockbuster"**. It was also critically well-received; the legendary movie reviewer Roger Ebert commented upon release that it offered a "unique" experience and **"entertainment so direct and simple that all of the complications of the modern movie seem to vaporize."**

The two sequels built on the winning formula, to the extent that many elements of the









original trilogy have become firmly entrenched in popular culture. Darth Vader is now often considered one of the most memorable and darkest villains in big screen history, while Obi Wan Kenobi and Yoda are seen as archetypal wise old mentors. X-Wings are among the most recognizable fictional spacecraft. Oh, and it has long, long ceased to surprise anyone that Darth Vader is actually Luke Skywalker's father...

A MULTI-BILLION DOLLAR INDUSTRY... AND THAT'S JUST THE MERCHANDISE

Naturally, as the franchise has flourished, more and more opportunities have opened up for merchandising. The resulting novels, comic books, computer games, toys and other officially licensed Star Wars media all fall into what has been dubbed the Star Wars Expanded Universe. All of these media outside the main films, The Clone Wars film and TV series, and Rebels TV series produced by LucasFilm are considered to be part of the Expanded Universe.

However, while it would be easy for LucasFilm to permit Expanded Universe stories to follow alternative continuities, where much material from the main films and other EU stories is largely disregarded, instead, the studio is determined that all of the EU stories can be brought together to function as a complete story. To this end, LucasFilm has its own dedicated team with the sole responsibility of overlooking this material to ensure its ultimate continuity.

The huge amount of merchandising over the last few decades has, hardly surprisingly, proved big, big business. To date, **Star Wars books have brought in revenues of \$1.82 billion**, while

the total revenue figure for video games has reached an even heftier \$3.4 billion. If you think that these figures look impressive, consider that they account for decades of sales; just last year, revenue from Star Wars games and toys was an utterly eye-watering \$1.5 billion.

Add all of these figures together, and it's clear that Star Wars merchandise is a multi-billion dollar industry even on just a yearly basis. And these figures have all been sourced before the arrival of *The Force Awakens* and the sequel trilogy, which should spark dramatic acceleration in merchandising revenue. Yes, Star Wars is well and truly back - and that's clear before we've even turned attention to the movie itself, which could prove to surprise even those with encyclopedic knowledge of the saga.

WHY THE FORCE AWAKENS COULD DEFY YOUR EXPECTATIONS

Indeed, if you've yet to see *The Force Awakens*, you shouldn't necessarily delve into any post-*Return of the Jedi* EU stories for clues of what to expect. That's because, following Disney's acquisition, LucasFilm has even further tightened its control over the individual narratives of the Expanded Universe going forward. George Lucas has long made clear that the highest degree of creative control within the Star Wars universe rests with him; as a result, all EU stories must take account of his own "canon" tales.

To even further expand this strategy, LucasFilm **revealed in April 2014 that, from that point on, previous Expanded Universe material would be rebranded Star Wars Legends.**



Image: David James © Lucasfilm Ltd.



Furthermore, the sequel trilogy of Episodes VII, VIII and IX will largely disregard what was told in the post-Return of the Jedi Expanded Universe, with the intention of “giv[ing] maximum creative freedom to the filmmakers and also preserv[ing] an element of surprise and discovery for the audience”.

A LONG-RUNNING SERIES NOW REVITALIZED

And yet, despite this subtle but potentially hugely significant change in artistic direction, it remains clear, from much of what we have already seen of the upcoming film, that some things never change. Faithful and casual fans alike will be delighted to see Harrison Ford, Mark Hamill, Carrie Fisher, Peter Mayhew, Anthony Daniels and Kenny Baker reprise their old roles of, respectively, Han Solo, Luke Skywalker, Leia Organa, Chewbacca, C-3PO and R2-D2.

However, there’s also a good injection of fresh talent. Some, like Andy Serkis as Supreme Leader Snoke and Max von Sydow as Lor San Tekka, are new to the franchise, but thoroughly familiar and established stars. Others are relative unknowns. Up front and center in much of the preview material have been Daisy Ridley as scavenger Rey and John Boyega as redeemed Stormtrooper Finn. So, there are plenty of nods to the glorious past as well as confident steps towards a more adventurous future.

STILL A HUGE BANKABLE FORCE... OR FORCE

While many of the cast members are no strangers to basking in cinematic hype and









acclaim, the younger leads could be especially stunned by how well *The Force Awakens* fares at the box office. In April this year, Amboee Brand Intelligence predicted that the movie **could amass revenues totalling almost \$540 million** on its way to achieving cinema's biggest ever global opening weekend. And, this month, FBR & Co. analyst Barton Crockett hinted that the film **will gross over \$3 billion across the world** - making it the new highest-grossing movie in history.

And, as we have already hinted ourselves, there are lots of new merchandising opportunities waiting in the wings... or should that be X-wings? In any case, the exciting new tie-in products heading our way include **a series of over 20 print and digital books, under the banner of "Journey to Star Wars: The Force Awakens"**, which will form part of the official canon. These books will include the next two titles in **a trilogy of novels that will fill in narrative gaps between Return of the Jedi and The Force Awakens**.

Then there's the partnership with Google which allows users of the search company's services **to join either the Dark or Light Side and, in the process, change the appearance of Google websites**. Meanwhile, Waze has **enhanced the iOS and Android versions of its navigation app** with the additions of C-3PO's voice and, on the digital in-app roads, such Star Wars items and characters as Stormtroopers and TIE fighters. There's also Sphero's remote-controlled toy version of the new droid, BB-8; we at AppleMagazine have already named it **our choice for Best Toy of 2015**.

THE REAL STARS IN STAR WARS

By the time you read this, *The Force Awakens* will have had three major premieres: **in Los Angeles on Monday, December 14; London on Tuesday, December 15; and Sydney on Wednesday, December 16.** We don't doubt for a moment that the latter two will have been super-glitzzy affairs, with hardly a shortage of massive, bustling and excitable crowds. And as for the California premiere? We've got plenty to report about that - from who turned up, to what George Lucas enthusiastically gushed to the press, to... well, pretty much all the big details we've been able to fit into our pages.

To meet the unsurprisingly huge number of premiere attendees eager to see the new film, screenings were shown across three theaters in Los Angeles at the world premiere. Unsurprisingly, plenty of key figures of *Star Wars* legend were in attendance - among them Harrison Ford, Carrie Fisher and Mark Hamill, who were all greeted with huge roars. The younger *Star Wars* debutants John Boyega, Oscar Isaac, Daisy Ridley and Adam Driver were also well-received, while franchise creator George Lucas was met with a standing ovation.

On the red carpet, Lucas **told reporters of his amazement at the modern impact of the franchise**, 38 years after the first movie's release. He recalled: "It started out wanting to do a film for young people that had psychological undercurrents for people who were going through adolescence – everything from mythological themes to spiritual themes. In the end, I think that is the thing that resonated with people." He cited the essence of the





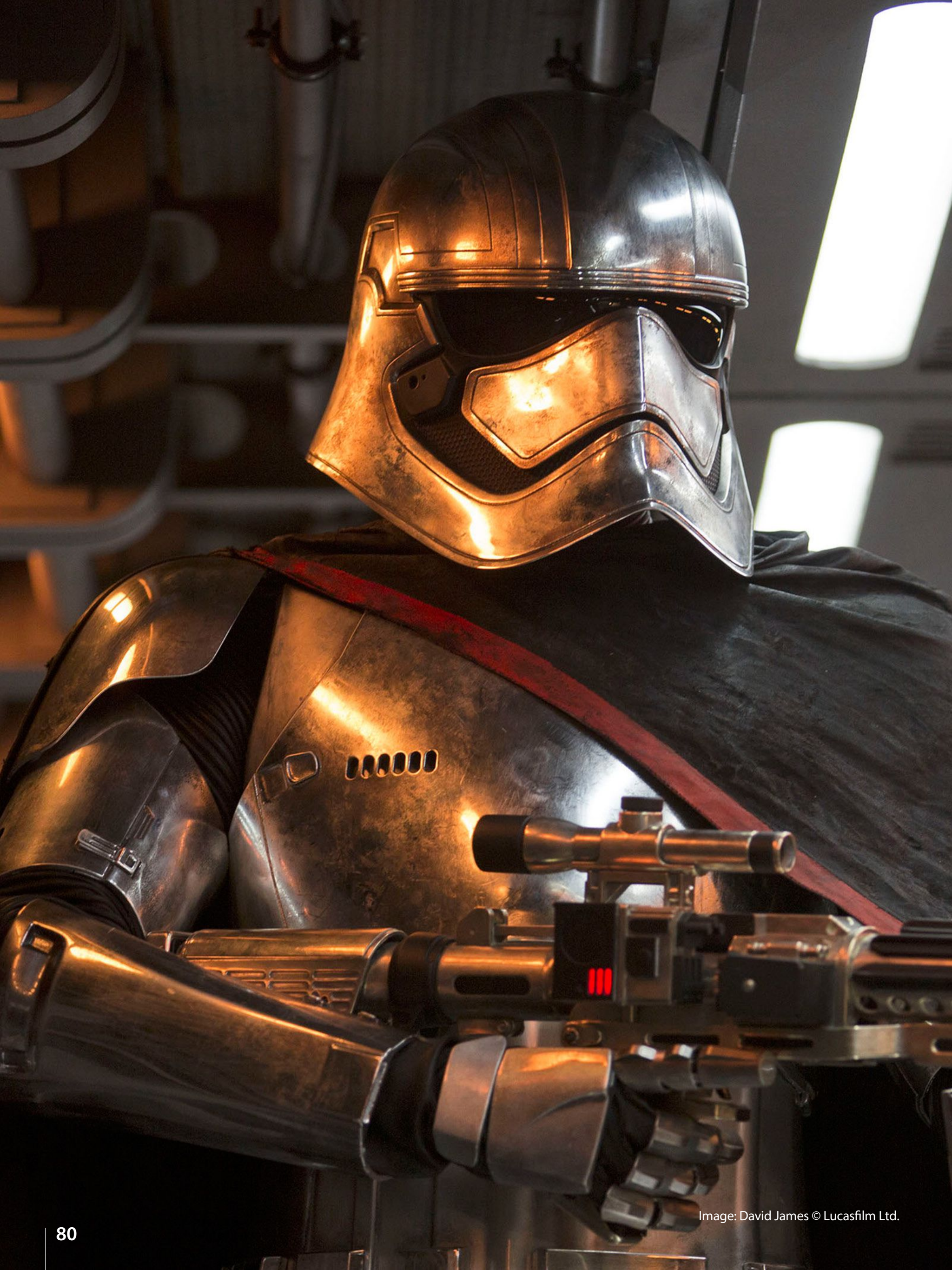


Image: David James © Lucasfilm Ltd.



series as “families”, adding: “It’s about what one generation leaves behind and the next generation has to deal with.”

HAN SOLO CAKES, STAR WARS LEGO... AND EVEN A MARRIAGE!

Preparations for the premiere had certainly been thorough. As reported by Variety, Disney closed and tented Hollywood Boulevard beforehand, while **Los Angeles Police Department provided further security in the form of 50 officers**. It was also outside the Dolby Theater - one of the three booked screening venues, along with the TCL Chinese and El Capitan theatres - that Disney staged a tented post-screening party which Star Wars fans could join.

On the subject of fans, they certainly got into the right spirit. Jedi robes and Stormtrooper outfits weren’t uncommon among their chosen costumes for the festivities, while one couple from Australia - Caroline Ritter and Andrew Porters - even planned to get hitched in unmistakable Star Wars style just ahead of the premiere. The nuptials would take place before a Stormtrooper honor guard in the TCL Chinese Theater’s forecourt, while “Darth Vader” would walk Ms Ritter to the altar.

Some other eccentric touches that we especially liked included intricate Lego models of new characters Rey and droid BB-8, plus - at the after-party - suitably themed food. The Los Angeles Times took photos of puddings adorned with images of Han Solo, C-3PO and Finn, plus Millennium Falcon macaroons - **“for the fan who has everything”**. They certainly got that right!









THE NEW MOVIE: "THE BEST BLOCKBUSTER SINCE THE ORIGINAL"

With Disney - as Variety also reported - having put an official embargo on press reviews of *The Force Awakens* until the following Wednesday morning, the brief reactions posted on Twitter in the wake of the premiere screenings provided the earliest reliable indications of how good the film actually was. So, what was the collective verdict? Basically, that director J. J. Abrams, who already boasted an impressive pedigree in the sci-fi and action arenas with earlier cinematic ventures *Mission: Impossible III*, *Star Trek* and *Star Trek Into Darkness*, had restored the *Star Wars* series to big screen respectability.

The stand-up comedian and writer Patton Oswalt succinctly tweeted that "JJ did it", while *The Office* star Rainn Wilson described it as "epic, awesome and perfect". Maybe calling *The Force Awakens* "perfect" wasn't as bold for the actor as you might think; after all, director Brett Morgan, who is especially well known for having helmed the Kurt Cobain documentary *Montage of Heck*, described the new *Star Wars* film as "the best blockbuster since the original". And we all know how significant the original *Star Wars* movie is in the history of cinematic blockbusters...

There is also evidence that Disney are far beyond happy with the finished product. After taking to the stage just after 7pm local time, early during the premiere, Robert Iger, the CEO of The Walt Disney Company, brought back his memories of seeing the first *Star Wars* film almost four decades earlier. He enthused: "None of this would have been possible without the sheer genius, the guts, the talent,





the vision of one person... George Lucas." He also thanked Abrams, who he claimed had "delivered a film that exceeded even our loftiest dreams and expectations."

HERE'S THE CLOSEST TO OUR VERDICT THAT WE CAN CURRENTLY GET...

And so we end with delivering our own verdict. *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* - is it an unqualified success? The biggest film ever made - in terms of euphoria, acclaim and financial success? It's obviously too early to give a solid assessment on any of this - but various signs so far seem overwhelmingly positive. Now it's time for everyone to book their ticket for a return to the greatest sci-fi saga in history. A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away... ■


by Benjamin Kerry & Gavin Lenaghan





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A close-up, low-angle shot of the rear of a dark-colored car. The focus is on the rear light assembly, which is illuminated with a red glow. The car's body panels and window are visible, reflecting the ambient light. The background is blurred, suggesting an outdoor setting.

SEATTLE TO DECIDE WHETHER TO LET UBER, LYFT DRIVERS UNIONIZE

Seattle may soon become the first city to let drivers of ride-hailing companies such as Uber and Lyft collectively bargain over pay and working conditions, a move opposed by the companies and one seen as a test case for the changing 21st century workforce.

The city council is to vote Monday on whether to extend collective bargaining rights for drivers of taxis, for-hire transportation companies and app-based ride-hailing services that are part of the growing on-demand economy.

A national leader on workers' rights, Seattle was among the first cities to pass laws to gradually raise the minimum wage to \$15 and require most employers to provide paid sick leave.

But says for-hire drivers as independent contractors are excluded from such protections. He wants to take the next step in the fight for workers' rights and give them a say in their working conditions. Independent contractors aren't covered by the National Labor Relations Act, which allows for collective bargaining.

Many drivers in Seattle are immigrants who depend on full-time work, but some make less than minimum wage and don't have basic worker rights, such as sick leave or protection from retaliation, O'Brien said.

"This feels like the right thing to do," said O'Brien, who expects a legal fight if the measure passes. "We don't take legal challenges lightly, but we recognize that businesses sue when they disagree with our policies."

San Francisco-based Uber and others say federal labor law prevents cities from regulating collective bargaining for independent contractors, and the ordinance would violate federal antitrust laws by allowing independent transportation providers to conspire to artificially drive up transportation costs.

"The ordinance is puzzling because I think it's generally believed to be flatly illegal what they're trying to do, and I assume the courts will look at that if it were to be successful," said Uber chief adviser David Plouffe, who ran President Barack Obama's 2008 campaign, during a recent talk in Seattle.

Samuel Estreicher, a law professor at New York University, said that if the drivers aren't considered as employees under federal labor law, there's no serious argument over whether that law pre-empts the city ordinance.

He said the bigger issue concerns antitrust laws, including whether independent businesses getting together to bargain constitutes an antitrust violation.

"There's a lot of agitation over the on-demand workforce," Estreicher said. Technology has made it easier to get services from people who are not classically controlled by employers, but the concern on the labor side is whether such workers are going to be protected, he noted.

"If the Seattle ordinance survives challenge, we'll see it in a lot of cities," he added.

Lea Vaughn, a University of Washington law professor, agrees with the ride-hailing companies that federal labor law would preempt the city ordinance. She raised a broader issue of whether the current labor law written for an industrial economy is well-suited for the new sharing economy.

Uber is currently facing a class-action lawsuit in federal court in California over worker classification. The plaintiffs named in the suit say they are Uber employees, not independent contractors, and have been shortchanged on expenses and tips.

Uber has about 400,000 drivers nationwide with about 10,000 in Seattle. Its rival, Lyft, also has thousands of drivers in Seattle but declined to give a specific number.



"We believe the proposed ordinance threatens the privacy of drivers, imposes substantial costs on passengers and the city, and conflicts with longstanding federal law," Lyft spokeswoman Chelsea Wilson said in a statement.

Uber says drivers have flexibility in deciding when they work and how many hours, and many chose to drive to supplement their income. Drivers don't have a say in rate changes, can be deactivated at will and don't have access to worker protections such as sick leave and minimum wage laws, Dawn Gearhart, a representative with Teamsters Local 117.

Under the proposed ordinance, the city will give certified nonprofits organizations a list of eligible drivers at each company, and the groups must show that a majority of drivers of each company want representation. Those organizations would then bargain on behalf of those drivers.

Michael Palmer, 55, who has been driving for Uber for 1 ½ years, said he's divided.

"Unions always have been a good thing in any business. It helps with having a voice," said Palmer, who drives about 50 hours a week. "But I don't know if a union would work for something like Uber."

"Are we employees or partners? We don't get treated as partners," said Fasil Teka, 40, who drives part time for Uber and works full time for a for-hire company. "We have no way to negotiate with Uber."

"The only way we can achieve what we deserve as a driver is by working together," he said.







AT LAST, LOVEMAKING FOR SHELDON, AMY ON 'BIG BANG THEORY'



In the same week, "Star Wars" returns and scientists-in-love Sheldon and Amy finally consummate their relationship on "The Big Bang Theory." Could even the geekiest fan ask for more?

On Thursday's episode (8 p.m. EDT, CBS), Jim Parsons' Sheldon and Mayim Bialik's Amy have sex for the first time, with each other or anyone else, more than six TV seasons after meeting through an online dating site.

But let the stars of the top-rated comedy tell you about it.

"Amy's been eager all along for a different kind of connection, but it's actually initiated by Sheldon," Bialik said.

"Sheldon's eager for her to know she's special to him, and this is one of the items on the list that he feels could show that," Parsons said.

So romantic! And how explicit is the scene?

Bialik: "More than we thought. We're in bed."

Parsons: "Well, of course we are. We aren't going into the back of a car."

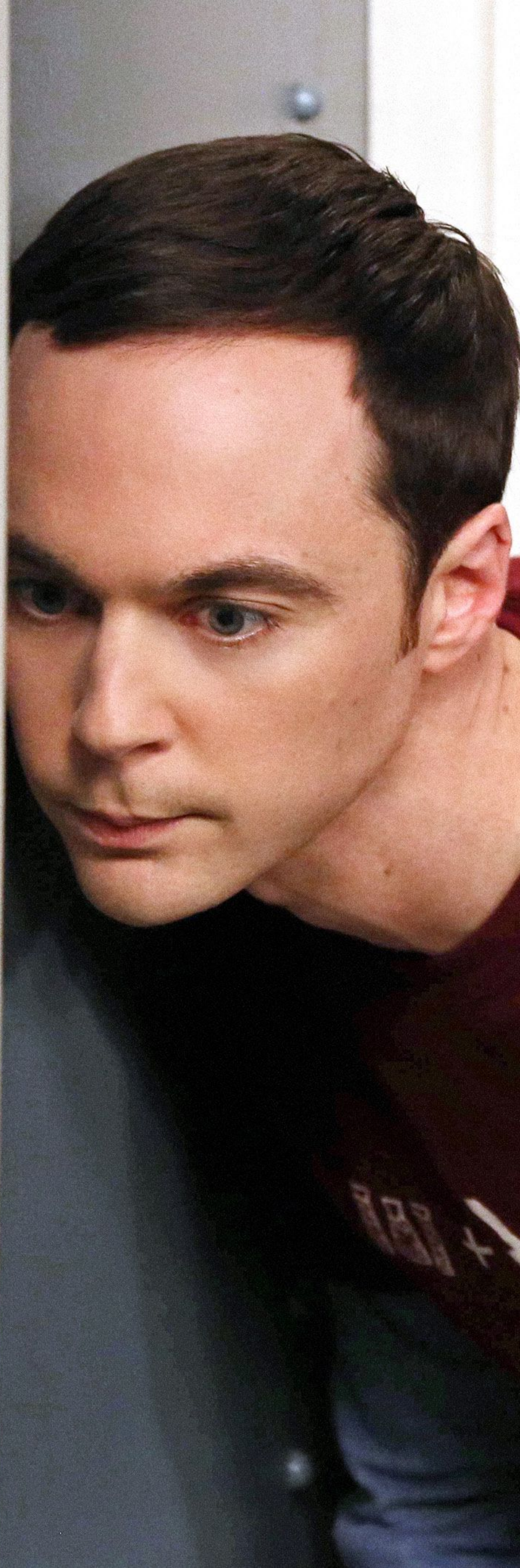
Bialik: "I thought we would just talk about it when it finally happened."

Parsons (dismissively): "Oh, no!"

Bialik: "There's a before and there's an after. There's no during."

"Star Wars: The Force Awakens," out Friday in the real world, is used as a comic device throughout the episode and even threatens to derail the couple's coupling.

After deciding to give Amy the gift of sex on her birthday, Sheldon realizes there's a conflict with his opening-day movie ticket. He gets









sage advice from the late Professor Proton, his childhood hero resurrected in ghostly form as a figment of Sheldon's subconscious.

The great Bob Newhart returns as the professor, grandly decked out in Obi-Wan Kenobi robes.

"It's hard for him (Sheldon) to understand that Amy won't accept the fact that this is the premiere of 'Star Wars,' so I have to present that side," Newhart said.

His delivery is as droll and his timing as impeccable as ever, Newhart milks the scene for all it's worth.

"Can I get out of this muumuu now?" Proton asks after counseling Sheldon.

"Those are the robes of the Jedi, the guardians of peace and justice in the galaxy," Sheldon replies.

"And they don't wear underwear," the professor complains.

Parsons and Bialik also make the most of the smartly - and sweetly - written episode, stumbling toward intimacy with tender regard for each other.

Series executive producer and co-creator Chuck Lorre, a master of network TV comedy whose credits include "Two and a Half Men," "Mike & Molly" and "Mom," had a look of eager anticipation when he arrived for the episode's taping last month at a Warner Bros. soundstage.

"It's exciting to see how far these characters have grown," Lorre said afterward. "We would never have anticipated that they would have progressed to the point where they're having real, in-depth relationships."





"It happened rather naturally, slowly, incrementally, but it's really delightful to get to see it play out," he said.

While newer cable and streaming comedies such as "Veep" and "Transparent" are reaping more Emmy and Golden Globe attention these days, "The Big Bang Theory" audience is steadfast.

Each episode is getting nearly 21 million views within seven days after it airs, up 10 percent compared to last year.

It's set to return for another season, No. 10. And after that?

"As long as we're telling good stories and the audience still wants to watch, why not?" Lorre said. "We're having a great time making the show, and hopefully a little of that gets on television."



CHINA'S ALIBABA PAYS \$266M FOR INFLUENTIAL HK NEWSPAPER

E-commerce company Alibaba is buying Hong Kong's South China Morning Post for 2.06 billion Hong Kong dollars (\$266 million), it said Monday, in a deal that's stirred concern the English-language paper's reporting may be softened under new Chinese owners.

The Chinese e-commerce giant is paying cash for the newspaper and the SCMP Group's other media assets, including magazines, outdoor advertising and digital media, the company said in a filing to the Hong Kong stock exchange. The deal was announced on Friday but no amount was given for the transaction.



Image: Kin Cheung

story
en
stand
ons

Lucky draw
Local hopes
get pole
positions for
Hong Kong Mile

SPORT C4

Broken homes
Tackling the
thorny issue of
responsibility for
children caught
up in divorce



> FOCUS A4

Morning Post

Friday, December 11, 2015 / See live updates at www.scmp.com / HK\$9



DIGEST

China accelerates talks on EU investment deal

China has speeded up investment talks with the European Union to counter the effect of US-led tensions, say observers. Beijing is believed to be willing to make compromises in the hope of reaching a broad pact next year. China says talks have achieved progress and substantive negotiations will start next month. > **CHINA A6**

India and Pakistan to restart peace talks

Peace talks between India and Pakistan, stalled since Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi took office, are to restart. Fighting along their border and elsewhere over the disputed, long-divided Kashmir will be sought to be stopped. > **INDIA A6**

Work on Columbia port project to resume

Work on the Columbia port project to resume. > **US A6**



MASKED BLAST



明報
The Journal

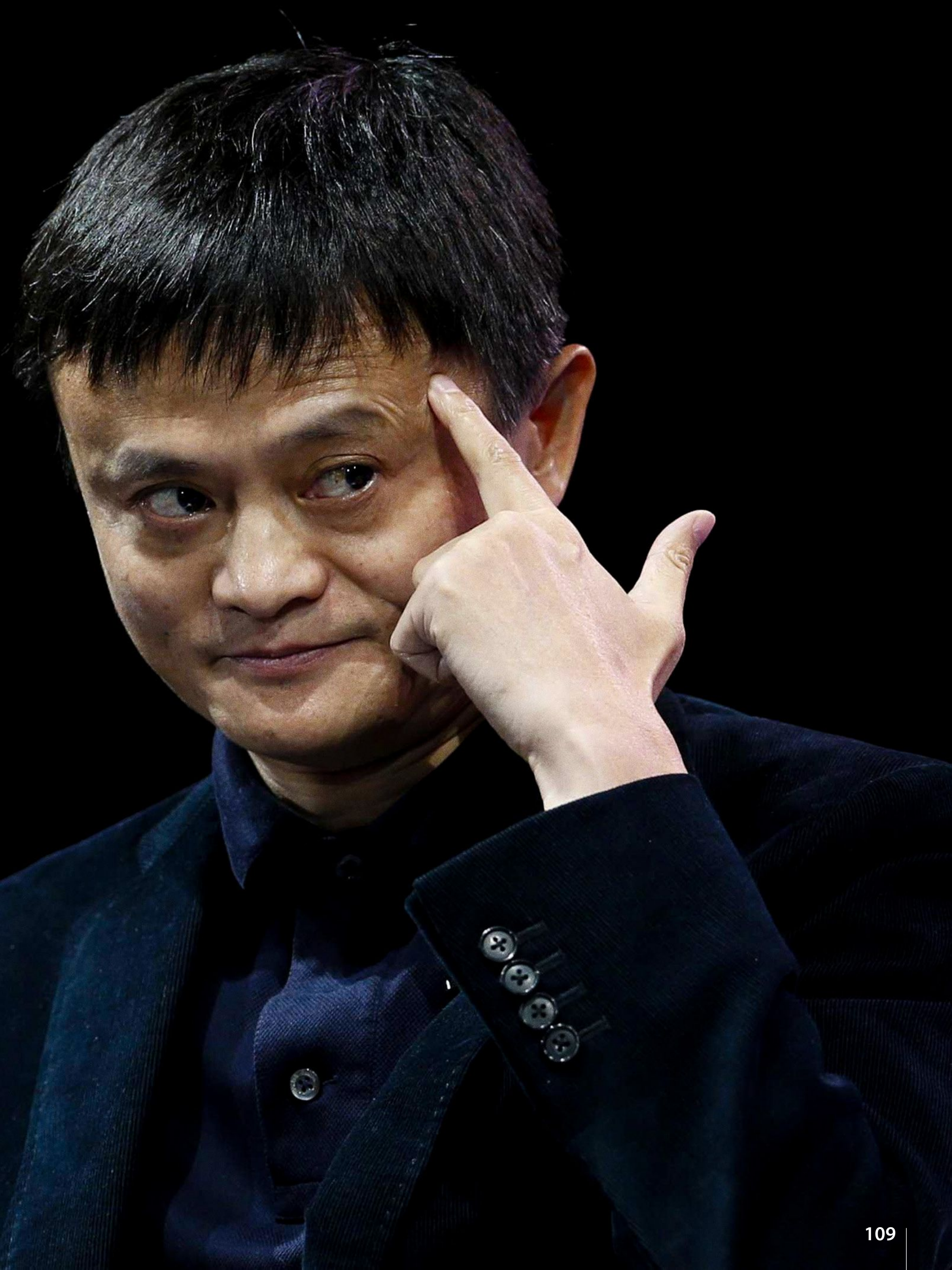
The sale of the 112-year paper, which has a wide international following for its China coverage, has raised fears that its reporting would be watered down under the ownership of a mainland Chinese company. The Post, whose current owner is Malaysian sugar tycoon Robert Kuok and his family, has won awards for coverage of political scandals and human rights in China, topics that are off-limits to mainland media.

The deal is the latest media-related acquisition for Alibaba as it diversifies beyond its core business of online shopping.

The SCMP said in its filing that traditional publishing has an “uncertain” future and Alibaba “will be able to unlock greater value from the content and brand than a traditional media business.”

Alibaba Executive Vice Chairman Joe Tsai said in a letter to readers last week that the company wants to build a China-focused media brand with an expanded international audience. He dismissed concerns that editorial independence would be compromised, promising that coverage would “objective, accurate and fair.”

Hong Kong news outlets have wider freedom to report than those in mainland China because the former British colony is guaranteed civil liberties such as freedom of the press thanks to a mini-constitution. However, there’s rising concern press freedom is shrinking as Beijing, which took control of Hong Kong in 1997, tightens its grip on the city.



BRITISH ASTRONAUT HOPES TO SEE NEW STAR WARS MOVIE IN SPACE

Timothy Peake, the first Briton to represent the European Space Agency aboard the International Space Station, will be away from the planet for six months but looks forward to Earthly pleasures like seeing the new Star Wars movie and having a Christmas pudding.

Peake is to blast off Tuesday from the Russian manned space facility in Baikonur, Kazakhstan, along with Timothy Kopra of the United States and Russian Yuri Malenchenko.

At a crew news conference on Monday, Peake said he expects ground staff will be able to download "Star Wars: The Force Awakens" for the crew to watch.

Peake says he's also looking forward to microgravity experiments inspired by Isaac Newton.



Image: Dmitry Lovetsky



TOP Free Apps



#01 – Monument Valley

By ustwo™

Category: Games

Requires iOS 6.0 or later. Compatible with iPhone 4, iPhone 4s, iPhone 5, iPhone 5c, iPhone 5s, iPhone 6, iPhone 6 Plus, iPhone 6s, iPhone 6s Plus, iPad, and iPod touch.



#02 – Elf Yourself by Office Depot, Inc.

By Magic Mirror LLC

Category: Entertainment

Requires iOS 7.0 or later. Compatible with iPhone, iPad, and iPod touch.



#03 – Facebook Messenger

By Facebook, Inc.

Category: Social Networking

Requires iOS 7.0 or later. Compatible with iPhone, iPad, and iPod touch.



#04 – Rayman Adventures

By Ubisoft

Category: Games

Requires iOS 8.0 or later. Compatible with iPhone, iPad, and iPod touch.



#05 – Temple Run 2

By Imangi Studios, LLC

Category: Games

Requires iOS 6.0 or later. Compatible with iPhone, iPad, and iPod touch.



#06 – YouTube

By Google, Inc.

Category: Photo & Video

Requires iOS 7.0 or later. Compatible with iPhone, iPad, and iPod touch.



#07 – Facebook

By Facebook, Inc.

Category: Social Networking

Requires iOS 7.0 or later. Compatible with iPhone, iPad, and iPod touch.



#08 – Instagram

By Instagram, Inc.

Category: Photo & Video

Requires iOS 7.0 or later. Compatible with iPhone, iPad, and iPod touch.



#09 – Snapchat

By Snapchat, Inc.

Category: Photo & Video

Requires iOS 7.0 or later. Compatible with iPhone, iPad, and iPod touch.



#10 – iTunes U

By Apple

Category: Education

Requires iOS 8.3 or later. Compatible with iPhone, iPad, and iPod touch.

iOS



#01 – OS X El Capitan

By Apple

Category: Utilities

Compatibility: OS X 10.6.8 or later



#02 – App for Instagram

By Joacim Ståhl

Category: Social Networking

Compatibility: OS X 10.7 or later, 64-bit processor



#03 – Xcode

By Apple

Category: Developer Tools

Compatibility: OS X 10.8.4 or later



#04 – Microsoft Remote Desktop

By Microsoft Corporation

Category: Business

Compatibility: OS X 10.7 or later, 64-bit processor



#05 – Full Deck Solitaire

By GRL Games

Category: Games

Compatibility: OS X 10.6.6 or later



#06 – Kindle

By AMZN Mobile LLC

Category: Reference

Compatibility: OS X 10.8 or later



#07 – Fotor Photo Editor

By Chengdu Everimaging Science and Technology Co., Ltd

Category: Photography

Compatibility: OS X 10.6 or later, 64-bit processor



#08 – The Unarchiver

By Dag Agren

Category: Utilities

Compatibility: OS X 10.6.0 or later, 64-bit processor



#09 – ooVoo Video Call, Text and Voice

By ooVoo LLC

Category: Social Networking

Compatibility: OS X 10.7 or later, 64-bit processor



#10 – Microsoft OneNote

By Microsoft Corporation

Category: Productivity

Compatibility: OS X 10.10 or later

TOP Free Apps

Mac OS X

TOP Paid Apps

iOS



#01 – Minecraft – Pocket Edition

By Mojang

Category: Games / Price: \$6.99

Requires iOS 5.1.1 or later. Compatible with iPhone, iPad, and iPod touch.



#02 – Heads Up!

By Warner Bros.

Category: Games / Price: \$0.99

Requires iOS 6.0 or later. Compatible with iPhone, iPad, and iPod touch.



#03 – Minecraft: Story Mode

By Telltale Inc

Category: Games / Price: \$4.99

Requires iOS 7.1 or later. Compatible with iPhone, iPad, and iPod touch.



#04 – Plague Inc.

By Ndemic Creations

Category: Games / Price: \$0.99

Requires iOS 6.0 or later. Compatible with iPhone, iPad, and iPod touch.



#05 – Geometry Dash

By RobTop Games AB

Category: Games / Price: \$1.99

Requires iOS 5.1.1 or later. Compatible with iPhone, iPad, and iPod touch.



#06 – Akinator the Genie

By Elokence

Category: Entertainment / Price: \$1.99

Requires iOS 7.0 or later. Compatible with iPhone, iPad, and iPod touch.



#07 – Bloons TD 5

By Ninja Kiwi

Category: Games / Price: \$2.99

Requires iOS 6.0 or later. Compatible with iPhone, iPad, and iPod touch.



#08 – THE GAME OF LIFE Classic Edition

By Electronic Arts

Category: Games / Price: \$0.99

Requires iOS 5.1.1 or later. Compatible with iPhone, iPad, and iPod touch.



#09 – Scribblenauts Remix

By Warner Bros.

Category: Games / Price: \$0.99

Requires iOS 5.1.1 or later. Compatible with iPhone, iPad, and iPod touch.



#10 – Facetune

By Lightricks Ltd.

Category: Photo & Video / Price: \$3.99

Requires iOS 7.0 or later. Compatible with iPhone, iPad, and iPod touch.



#01 – GarageBand

By Apple

Category: Music / Price: \$4.99

Compatibility: OS X 10.9 or later



#02 – AntiVirus Sentinel Pro

By Calin Popescu

Category: Utilities / Price: \$9.99

ompability: OS X 10.7 or later, 64-bit processor



#03 – Logic Pro X

By Apple

Category: Music / Price: \$199.99

Compatibility: OS X 10.8.4 or later, 64-bit processor



#04 – Duplicate Photos Fixer Pro

By Systweak Software

Category: Photography / Price: \$0.99

Compatibility: OS X 10.7 or later



#05 – The Sims™ 2: Super Collection

By Aspyr Media, Inc.

Category: Games / Price: \$29.99

Compatibility: OS X 10.9.2 or later



#06 – Final Cut Pro

By Aspyr Media, Inc.

Category: Games / Price: \$29.99

Compatibility: OS X 10.9.2 or later



#07 – Document Writer

By xiong feng

Category: Business / Price: \$9.99

Compatibility: OS X 10.7 or later



#08 – BetterSnapTool

By Andreas Hegenberg

Category: Productivity / Price: \$1.99

Compatibility: OS X 10.6 or later, 64-bit processor



#09 – PDF Expert by Readdle

By Readdle

Category: Productivity / Price: \$19.99

Compatibility: OS X 10.10 or later, 64-bit processor



#10 – FaceTime

By Apple

Category: Social Networking / Price: \$0.99

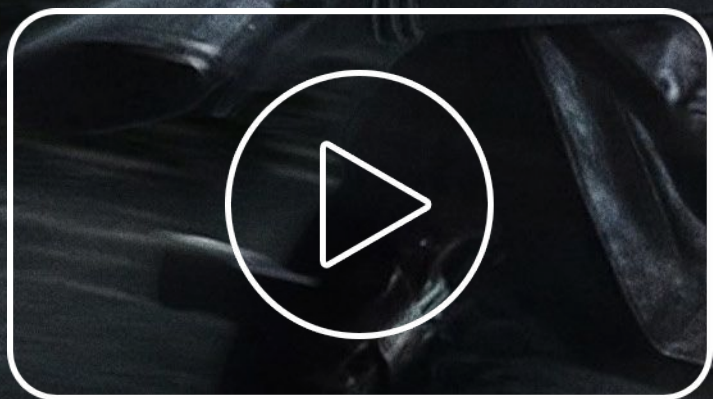
Compatibility: OS X 10.6.6 or later

TOP Paid Apps

Mac OS X

iTunes

Review



Trailer

Movies & TV Shows

Rotten Tomatoes



71 %



iTunes Preview



by Colin Trevorrow
Genre: Action & Adventure
Released: 2015
Price: \$19.99

★★★★★
2843 Ratings

Jurassic World

Set twenty two years after the original Jurassic Park, this instalment in the movie franchise sees a new theme park being built on the site of the original park. After a genetically-modified dinosaur breaks loose and goes on a rampage across the park, it's up to a navy veteran, the staff of the park, and four trained raptors to take it down.

FIVE FACTS:

1. This is the first Jurassic Park movie to not feature animatronic dinosaurs created by Stan Winston, who passed away in 2008. The animatronics are instead created by effects studio Legacy Effects.
2. Chris Pratt, who plays main character Owen Grady, is known for his role in popular comedy series Parks and Recreation. In a behind the scenes video for the second season of the show (2010), he reads out a fake text from Steven Spielberg about being cast in Jurassic Park 4. He was then actually cast as the lead in the 4th Jurassic Park movie.
3. According to Fandango, a movie ticket-selling service, it would cost approximately \$23,432,400,000 to build a real life Jurassic Park.
4. Jurassic World is the third highest-grossing movie of all time in North America and the world, as well as being the highest-grossing film of 2015 and in the Jurassic Park movie series.
5. A Jurassic World sequel is in the works, and is due to be released in the summer of 2018.



Cast Interview



Fantastic Four

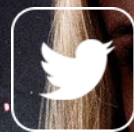
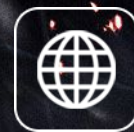
A reboot of the 2005 movie adaptation of the popular comic book series. After a scientific experiment in an alternate universe goes horribly wrong, a band of four people gain superhuman powers, which they must use to defeat Doom, who intends to destroy the human race.

FIVE FACTS:

1. Jamie Bell, who portrays The Thing/ Ben Grimm, starred in popular British dance drama movie *Billy Elliot*, which went on to spawn a West End and Broadway musical. He has also starred in the video for rock band Green Day's *Wake Me Up When September Ends*.
2. Dan Castellaneta stars in the movie as Reed's teacher. Castellaneta is famed for voicing a variety of major characters in *The Simpsons*, as well as starring in episodes of other comedies including *Arrested Development*, *Friends*, and *That '70s Show*.
3. This is the first time the character of The Thing was created in computer-generated imagery rather than going through rigorous prosthetics and make-up.
4. Director Josh Trank had several small dogs, which were left in a rented house in New Orleans while the film was shooting there. The dogs caused as much as \$100,000 damage to the property.
5. Philip Glass contributed to the score for the movie. Glass is considered to be one of the most influential composers of the 20th and 21st century, and has also had his music featured on *The Truman Show* and *Watchmen*, as well as one of the *Grand Theft Auto* games.



iTunes Preview



by Josh Trank
Genre: Action & Adventure
Released: 2015
Price: \$14.99

★★★★★
422 Ratings



Trailer

Rotten Tomatoes



10%





Cast Interview



iTunes

Review

Music



iTunes Preview



Genre: Pop
Released: Dec 08, 2015
5 Songs
Price: \$3.99

★★★★★
5 Ratings



Music video for the original song

Alive (Remixes) - EP

Sia

A five-track EP of remixes of the Australian singer/songwriter's latest single "Alive". Co-written by Adele (whose album it was originally intended for), this is a must for a fan of either of the two pop legends.

FIVE FACTS:

1. Sia contributed to the soundtrack to the 2014 movie adaptation of the Broadway musical *Annie*, which saw her go on to be nominated for a Golden Globe for "Best Original Song".
2. She has also starred in the popular comedy cartoon *South Park*. Instead of starring as herself, she provided the voice for a portrayal of fellow pop star Lorde.
3. Sia was once a background vocalist for the British dance act Jamiroquai.
4. Sia frequently co-writes songs for other recording artists, including Beyonce, Flo Rida, and Rihanna.
5. For live performances of songs from latest album *1000 Forms of Fear*, Sia chose not to show her face, due to a desire to stop performing and a need of privacy. Instead, she would face away from the audiences, or would hide her face behind over-sized platinum blonde wigs.





A live TV performance of the song

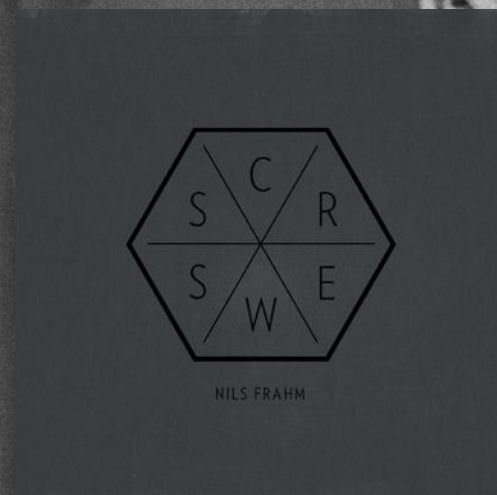
Screws Reworked

Nils Frahm

This album is a reimagining of Frahm's 9th album *Screws*, which was released to critical acclaim back in 2012. This is a must for anyone looking to delve deeper into classical or electronic music, and for anyone who is a fan of the Erased Tapes record label.

FIVE FACTS:

- 1.** Frahm is on the Erased Tapes record label, which is home to fellow contemporary classical performers A Winged Victory for the Sullen and Ólafur Arnalds, who has won a BAFTA for his work on popular British drama *Broadchurch*.
- 2.** Frahm composed and produced the score for the award-winning German drama movie *Victoria*, which is famed for being shot in one long take.
- 3.** Frahm managed to record *Screws* whilst suffering from a thumb injury; an achievement since most of his work is done on various forms of piano and synthesizer.
- 4.** David Klavins, a German-Latvian piano maker who is famed for creating the world's largest piano, specially designed and made a piano for Frahm's. The UNA CORDA comes in at just under 100kg, and has one string per key, rather than the commonly used three strings.
- 5.** Frahm's single *More* was featured in a condensed form on the trailer for *Assassin's Creed Unity*.

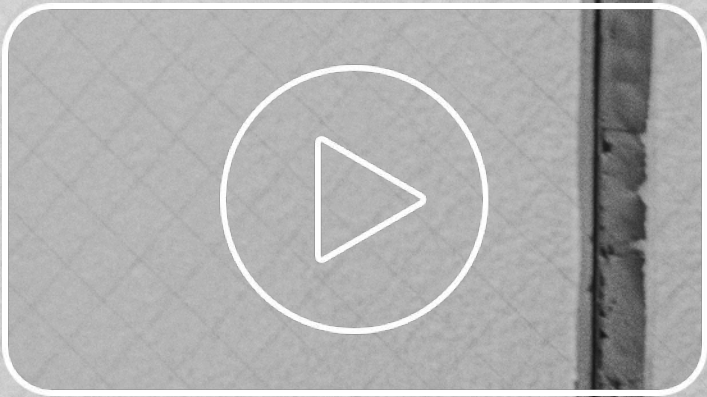
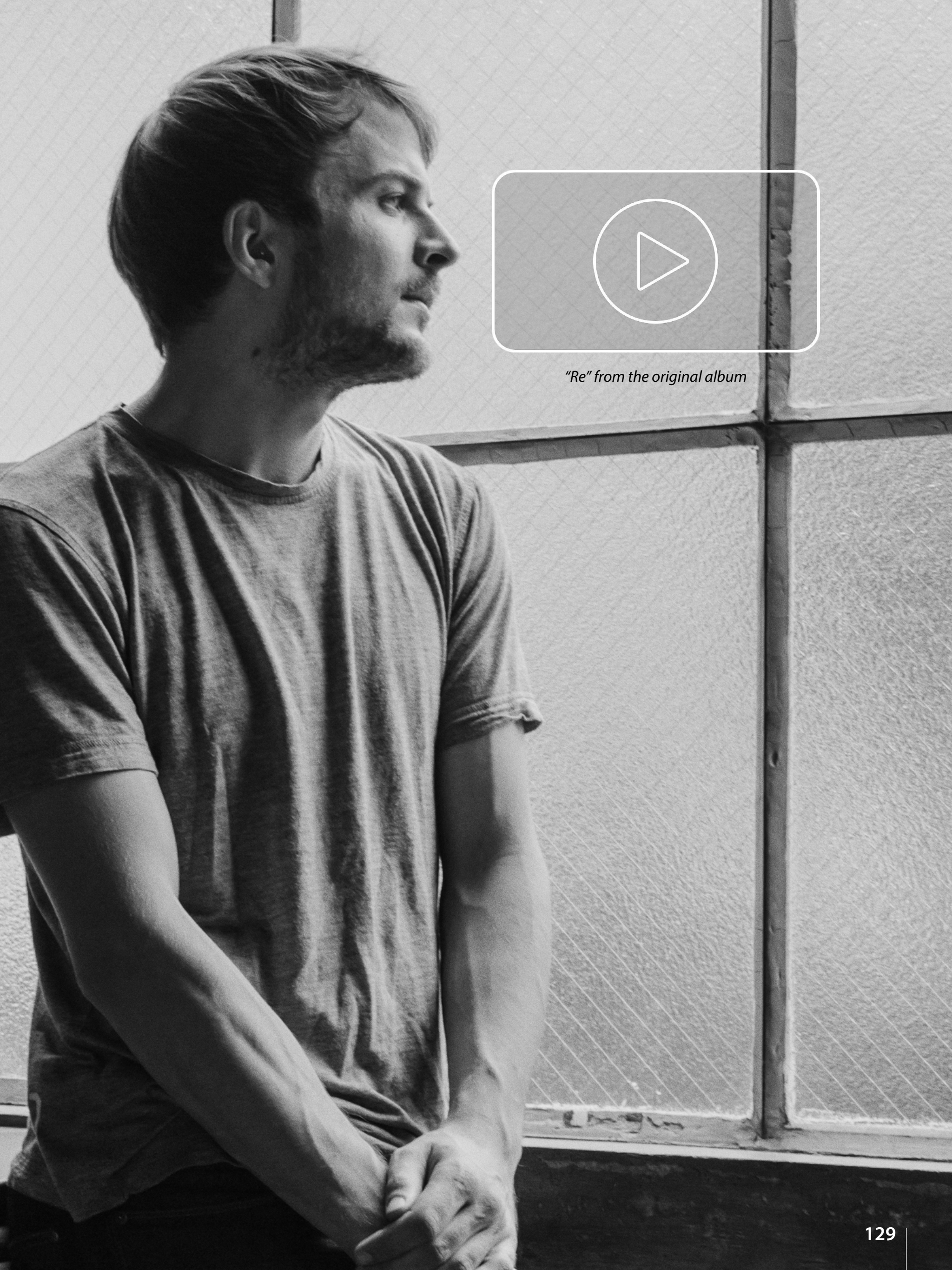


iTunes Preview



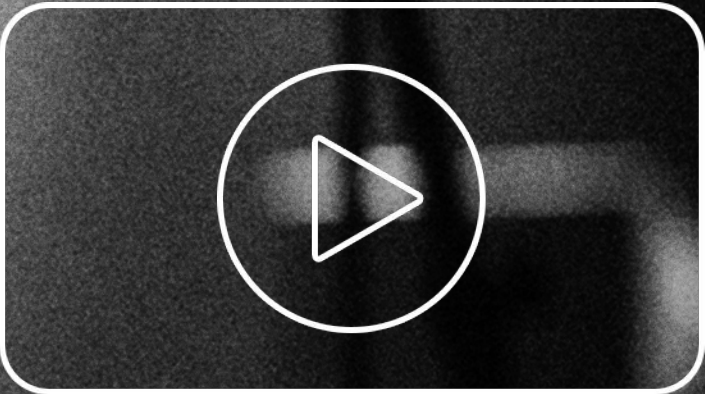
Genre: Electronic
Released: Dec 11, 2015
9 Songs
Price: \$8.99

We have not received enough ratings to display an average for this album.



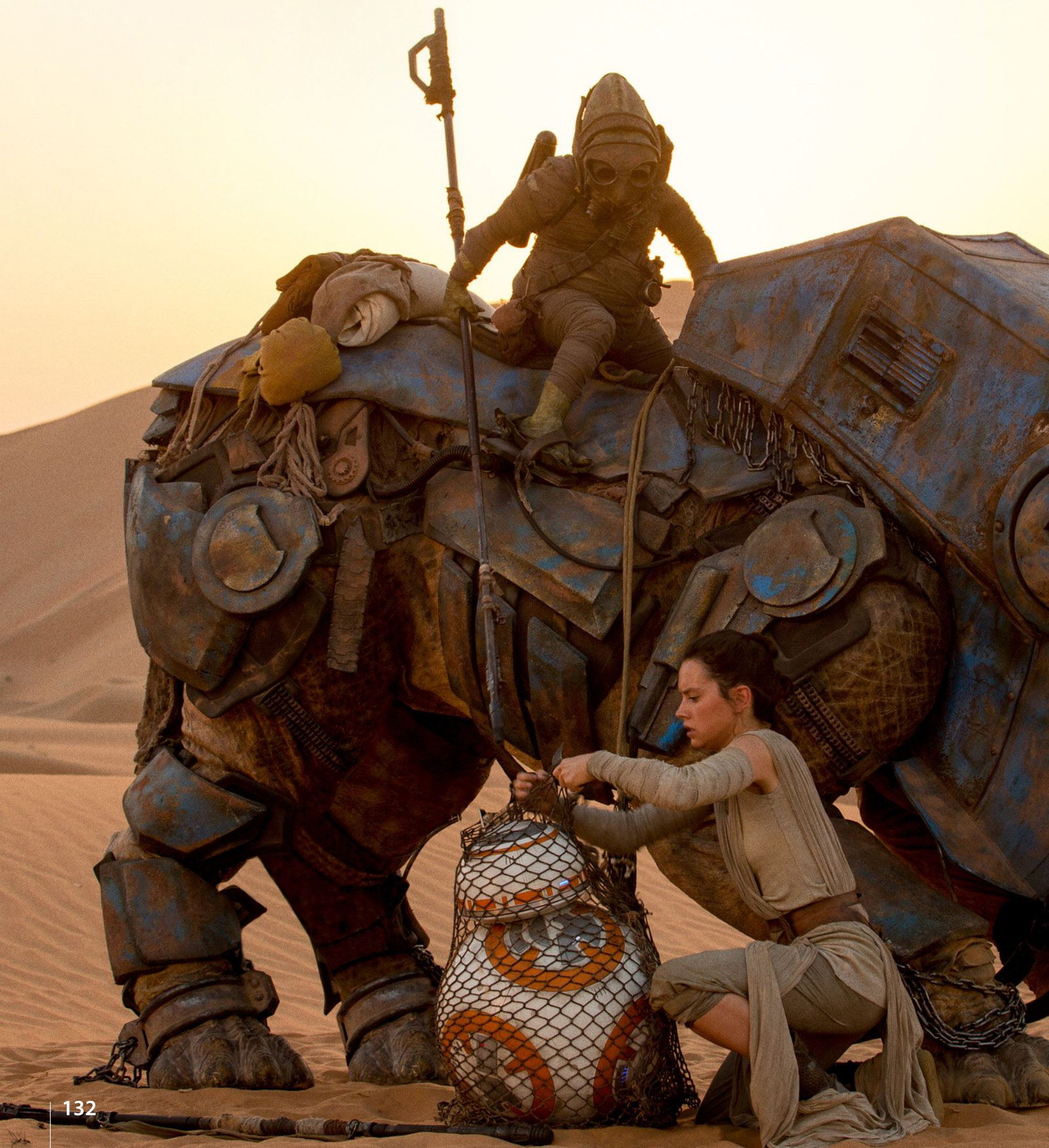
"Re" from the original album





A live performance from Frahm for KEXP

WITH 'FORCE AWAKENS' LOOMING, 'HEART OF THE SEA' SINKS





The movie industry braced for the coming storm of "The Force Awakens" in a quiet weekend at the box office where "The Hunger Games: Mockingjay, Part 2" notched its fourth-straight week atop the box office and Ron Howard's whaling tale "In the Heart of the Sea" capsized.

With "The Force Awakens" lurking, few studios wanted to push out a new release ahead of the expected box-office behemoth. That left the final chapter of Lionsgate's "Hunger Games" saga to remain No. 1 with \$11.3 million according to studio estimates Sunday, bringing its domestic total to \$245 million.

"In the Heart of the Sea," starring Chris Hemsworth, was the only major new wide release to test the pre-"Star Wars" waters. But hopes for the Warner Bros. film sank with an estimated \$11 million despite a production budget around \$100 million.

"Ron Howard is an accomplished, terrific filmmaker who took this ambitious project on as a real passion, and we're proud to have made it with him," said Jeff Goldstein, domestic distribution head for Warner Bros.

Though Goldstein acknowledged it was a disappointing start, he hopes that "In the Heart of the Sea" -- about the shipwreck of the Essex, which inspired Herman Melville's "Moby-Dick" -- will benefit over the Christmas holiday by getting out ahead of "The Force Awakens," which opens Thursday night.

"There's a cultural phenomenon around the corner," Goldstein said. "Our hope was to get in in front of it and get some word of mouth so that when you get down to Christmas week - we leapfrog over this coming week -- that you can break through the clutter of those other new movies."





In limited release, Adam McKay's comic rendering of the economic collapse, "The Big Short," opened strongly with \$720,000 in eight theaters. The Paramount Pictures release came into the weekend riding good reviews and a wave of nominations from the Screen Actors Guild and the Golden Globes, where it landed four nods including best picture, comedy, as well as nominations for stars Steve Carell and Christian Bale.

Rob Moore, vice chairman of Paramount, credited McKay for bringing a wry sense of humor to the Michael Lewis adaptation, and creating a movie both powerful and commercial. The strong response to "The Big Short" also vindicated Paramount's decision -- made after early screenings of the film -- to move the film, which opens wide on Dec. 23, into awards season from its planned release in 2016.

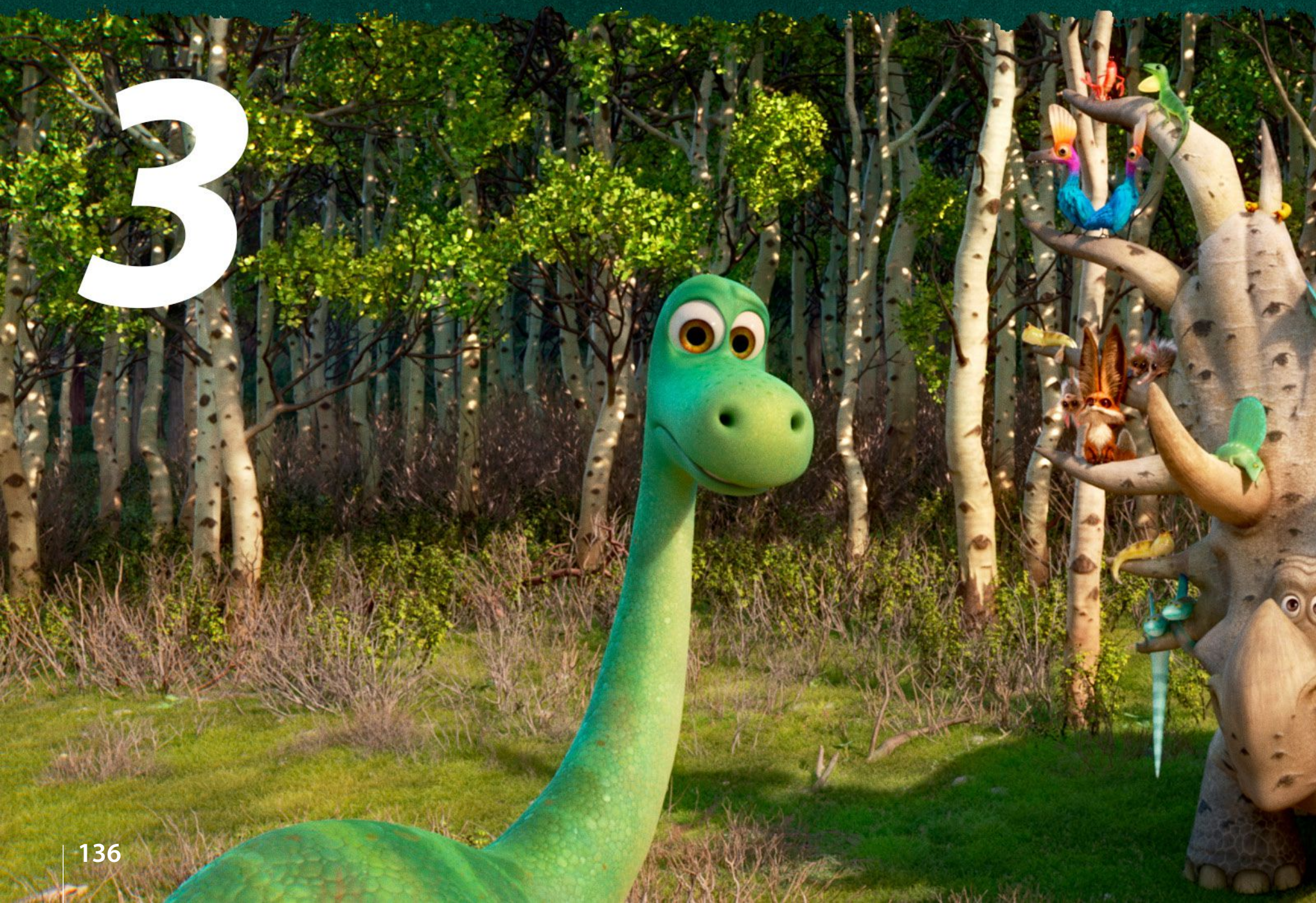
"We thought that we had something really special," Moore said. "The last week with all the critical attention and audience reaction has certainly proved that out."

The low-key weekend allowed Pixar's "The Good Dinosaur" to take third place with \$10.5 million in its third week. Ryan Coogler's acclaimed "Rocky" sequel "Creed" followed close behind with \$10.1 million in its third week. Slowly expanding Oscar contenders "Spotlight" and "Brooklyn" -- both in their sixth week -- continued to crack the top 10 with \$2.5 million and \$2 million, respectively.

But with "The Force Awakens" breaking advance ticket sales records, the force of "Star Wars" was felt a week before it even opens.



3



2

"There's no question that this weekend was affected by the anticipation of 'Star Wars,'" said Paul Dergarabedian, senior media analyst for box office data firm Rentrak. "You have countless moviegoers poised and ready to hit the multiplex later this week. We're on the cusp of an earth-shattering weekend at the box office."

Estimated ticket sales for Friday through Sunday at U.S. and Canadian theaters, according to Rentrak. Where available, the latest international numbers for Friday through Sunday are also included. Final domestic figures will be released Monday.

1. *"The Hunger Games: Mockingjay - Part 2,"*
\$11.3 million.

2. *"In the Heart of the Sea,"* \$11 million.

3. *"The Good Dinosaur,"*
\$10.5 million.

4. *"Creed,"* \$10.1 million.

5. *"Krampus,"* \$8 million.



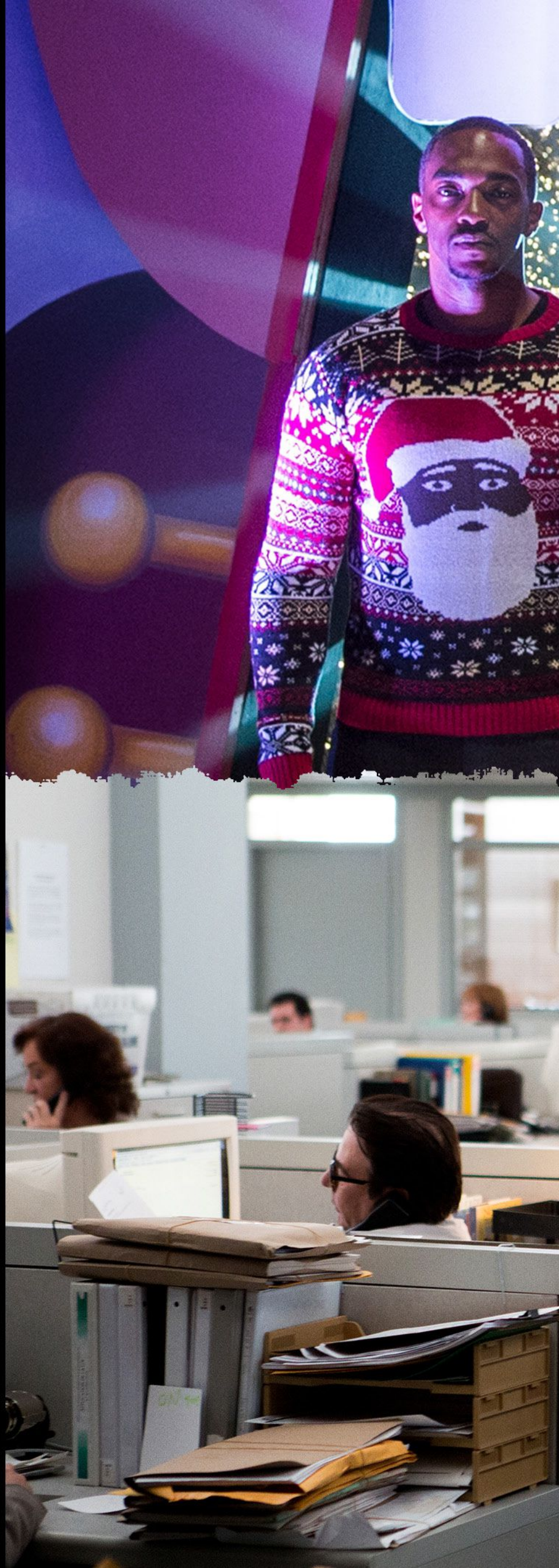
6. *"Spectre,"* \$4 million.

7. *"The Night Before,"* \$3.9 million.

8. *"The Peanuts Movie,"* \$2.7 million.

9. *"Spotlight,"* \$2.5 million.

10. *"Brooklyn,"* \$2 million.





SIRI VS CORTANA VS 'OK GOOGLE': WHO'S BETTER, WHO'S BEST





Cortana's learning the neighborhood. Google's digital assistant can't tell a joke. And Siri apparently has a thing for the metric system.

Those are just a few of the things I learned after staging a face-off between the three leading digital assistants. Apple's Siri and "OK Google" - they're not big on personification at Google - are now standard on smartphones; Microsoft recently added its Cortana service to Windows 10, so it works on PCs, too.

Now that just about anyone can talk to their phone or computer, we wanted to see what happens when you try.

Though none of the assistants are perfect, they do have distinct personalities, even if they're just deliberate artifacts of their creators.

I asked the same 10 questions of each service, using an iPhone with Siri, a Nexus phone with Android's "OK Google" and a Microsoft Surface Pro tablet with Cortana.



INFORMATION PLEASE

First up: Some basic factual questions. All three did pretty well when asked, “What’s it like outside?”

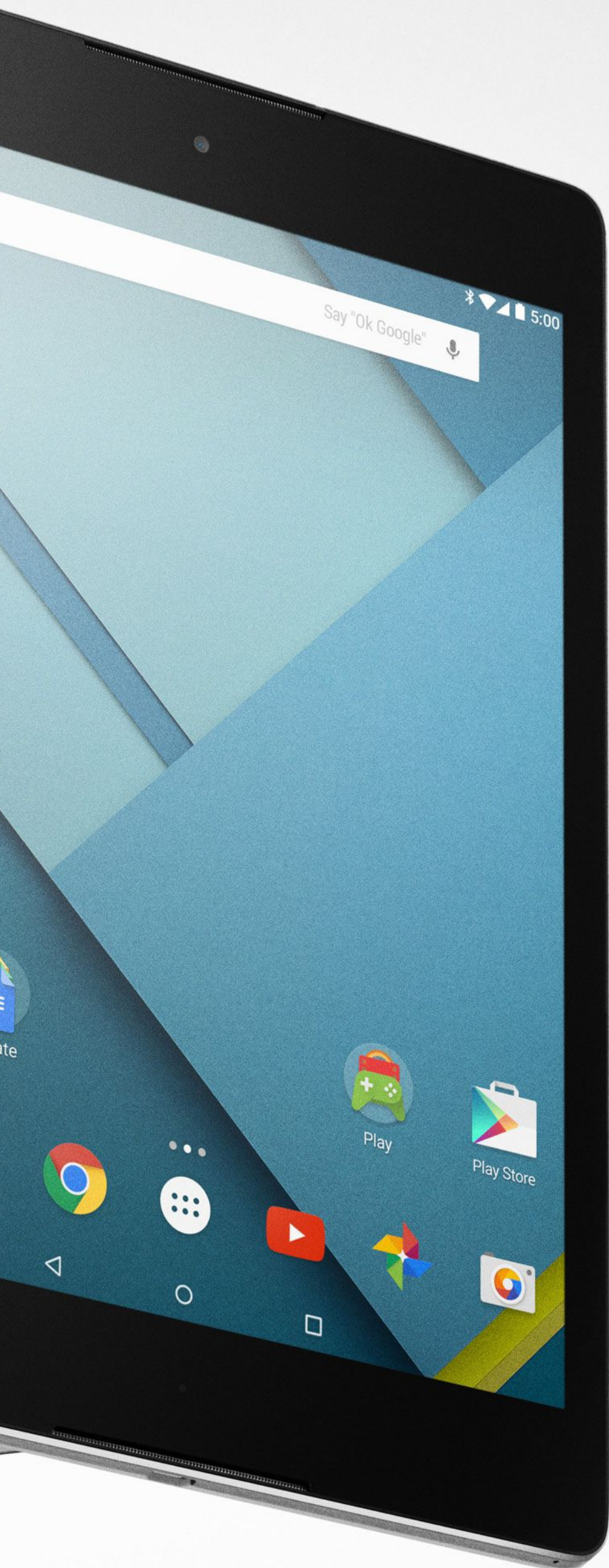
Cortana earned extra points for answering with a spoken weather report. Google and Siri each showed a screen image that listed current conditions and a forecast.

All three supplied President Obama’s age. When asked “What’s his wife’s name?” they all remembered that the question referred to the president, and correctly identified the First Lady: Michelle Obama.

Similarly, they all knew the length of the Golden Gate Bridge. But for some reason, Siri answered in meters, while Cortana and Google stuck to feet.







AT YOUR SERVICE

Next came more complicated tasks, like finding the nearest pharmacy. Google and Siri listed three within a half-mile of The Associated Press bureau in downtown San Francisco. But neither mentioned the drug store on the ground floor of the building where the bureau is located. Cortana did.

Posing questions is hungry work. I asked for help making a lunch reservation at Credo, a fancy restaurant around the corner. Siri and Cortana were stumped, but Google automatically fired up the Open Table app on the Nexus phone, with the form already filled out to make a reservation. Too bad the place is so trendy; it was booked for weeks.

Ever feel like ducking work to catch an afternoon movie? (Shhh! Don't tell my editor.) All three assistants had local movie listings at their digital fingertips. But Siri led off with a new release at a theater just half a mile from the AP bureau. With a couple of taps, Siri had opened Fandango, an app that lets you buy tickets online.

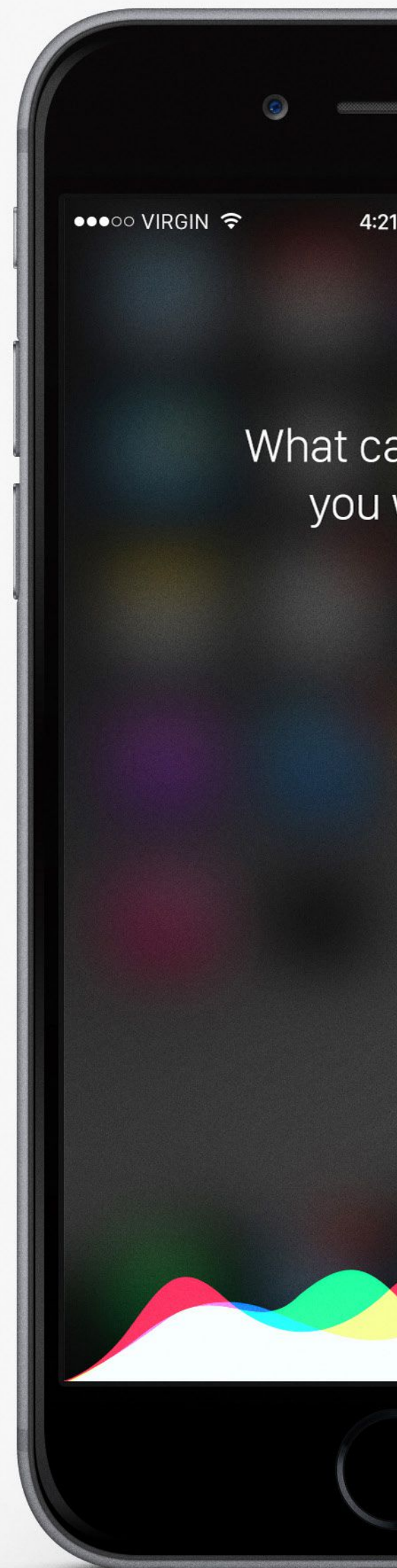
Google also connected with Fandango. Cortana had more trouble; Microsoft lags behind Apple and Google in the number of apps that work with its software, and I couldn't get the right Fandango app to load on a Surface tablet.

JUST FOR LAUGHS

Finally, a personality test. I challenged each to tell a joke. Siri had the best answer: "If I told you a joke in my language, I'd have to explain it."

Then I tried the famous line from "2001: A Space Odyssey" in which astronaut Dave Bowman tells the ship's computer: "Open the pod bay doors." Cortana knows the right answer: "I'm sorry Dave. I'm afraid I can't do that." But Siri had a better one: "Doesn't anybody knock anymore?"

To be clear, these aren't the witty rejoinders of some artificial intelligence. The creators of Siri and Cortana thought it would be fun to pre-load each service with humorous answers to predictable questions.





Google doesn't bother with such frills. Sticking to its search-engine roots, "OK Google" answered the "2001" question by silently presenting a series of Internet links, starting with one for a YouTube clip from the movie.

Likewise, when asked about the meaning of life, Siri and Cortana were both ready with a quip. Google just recited a dry definition that only a biologist could love: "Life is the condition that distinguishes animals and plants from inorganic matter. ..."

FINAL SCORE

All three services are good on factual questions. Siri's programmers have the best sense of humor. Google stays focused on the task at hand. And Cortana is quickly catching up to both of them.



Image: Lucy Nicholson

IN TECH: AI RESEARCH CENTER, ANDROID PAY, ONEDRIVE STORAGE

Three billionaires who launched PayPal and then went on to even greater success in their next ventures are now trying to make sure that artificial intelligence does more good than harm to humans.

PayPal ringleaders Elon Musk, Peter Thiel and Reid Hoffman are joining forces with several other technology luminaries and companies to contribute \$1 billion to finance a Silicon Valley research center that will dig deeper into the field of artificial intelligence, or “machine learning.”

The nonprofit company, called OpenAI, will focus on improving “digital intelligence in the way that is most likely to benefit humanity as a whole.”





Musk, who has amassed an estimated fortune of \$13 billion, has been particularly outspoken about his fears that computers could work against humans if the efforts to develop artificial intelligence go awry. He made waves last year when he described artificial intelligence as a potential “demon” and our “biggest existential threat.”

OpenAI will be run by Ilya Sutskever, who spent the past three years working for Google’s “brain team” that focused on machine learning.

Although he first got rich as a PayPal co-founder, Musk has made far more money as CEO of electric car maker Tesla Motors and rocket ship maker Space X.



A close-up, low-angle shot of a person's arm and shoulder. The person is wearing a blue t-shirt. The background is dark and out of focus. The lighting is soft, highlighting the texture of the skin and the fabric of the shirt.

Thiel, PayPal's former CEO, is better known as one of Facebook's early investors and a critic of college education. His fortune is currently estimated at about \$3 billion.

Hoffman was one of PayPal's first employees and then went on to co-found professional networking service LinkedIn Corp., which accounts for most of his estimated fortune of about \$4 billion.


TAP-AND-PAY SERVICES CONTINUE TO EXPAND GRADUALLY

Google said Tuesday that it will start offering Android Pay in Australia in the first half of next year. Google Inc. says it's working with leading financial institutions with the goal of making it available to MasterCard and Visa card holders. Apple Pay launched in Australia last month, but only for American Express customers.

Android Pay is Google's answer to Apple Pay, which requires an Apple device. Both let you make purchases by tapping the phone next to a store's payment machine - as long as it's a newer machine with wireless capabilities known as NFC.

Samsung has its own payment service, Samsung Pay, on its main Android phones. It goes further than Android and Apple Pay in working with many machines that lack NFC. That's because it has a backup mechanism to replicate old-school card swipes.





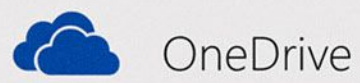
On Tuesday, Samsung announced support for 19 additional banks, including PNC Bank and KeyBank.

Even as phone makers push their mobile-payment services, financial institutions and retailers such as Wal-Mart have been working on their own services.

After a backlash, Microsoft is reversing part of its plan to tighten free storage offered through its OneDrive online storage service.

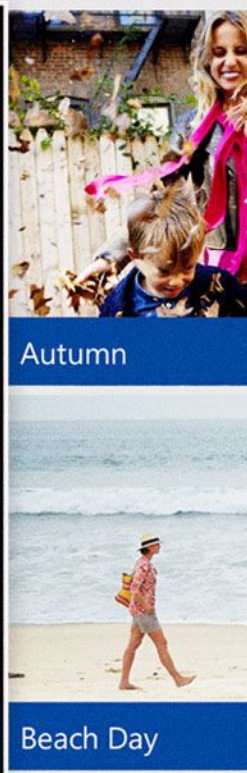
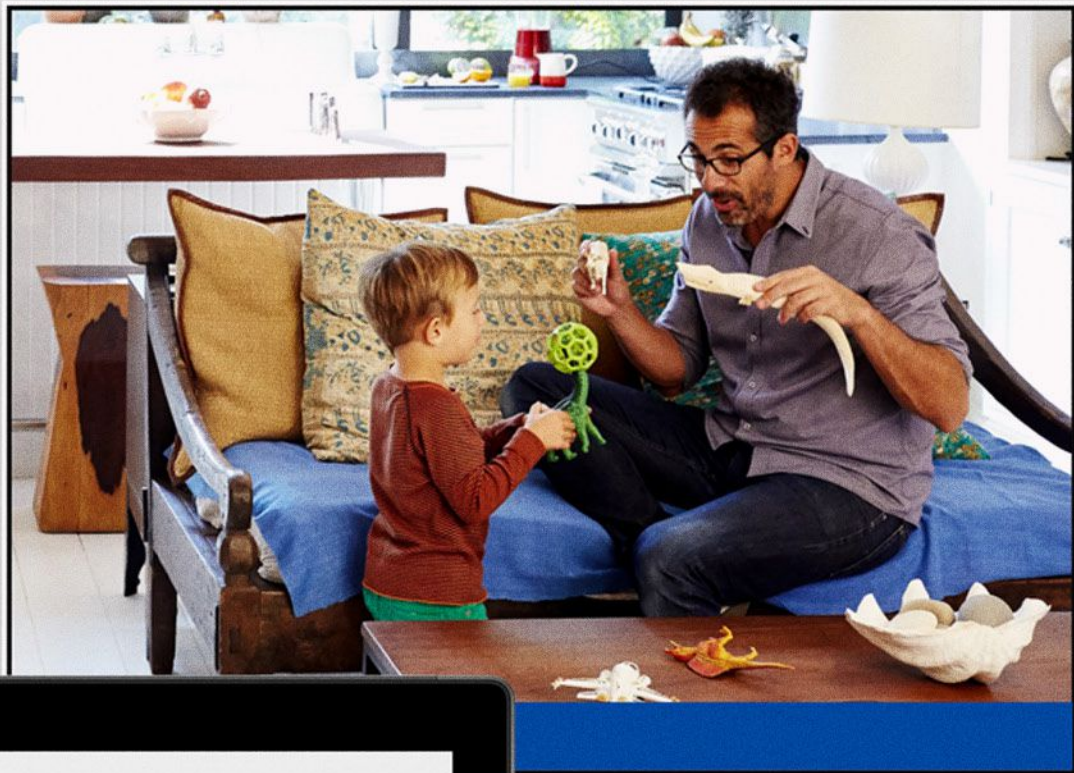
Last month, Microsoft said it will cut its free option to 5 gigabytes next year, down from 15 gigabytes now. Microsoft says the new allotment is enough for about 6,600 Office documents or 1,600 photos.

That cut will still apply to new customers, but existing customers can keep the 15 gigabytes, plus any bonuses they had earned through promotions. But they must claim them by the end of January at **<http://aka.ms/onedrivestorage>**.

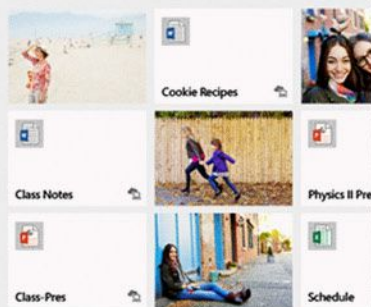


OneDrive

Photos & videos Shared



OneDrive v



Microsoft Corp. still plans to eliminate unlimited storage for subscribers of its Office 365 service, which starts at \$7 a month. Subscribers will now be limited to 1 terabyte, or 1,000 gigabytes, of storage. The company said a “small number of users” had abused the unlimited option by backing up numerous personal computers and storing entire movie collections.

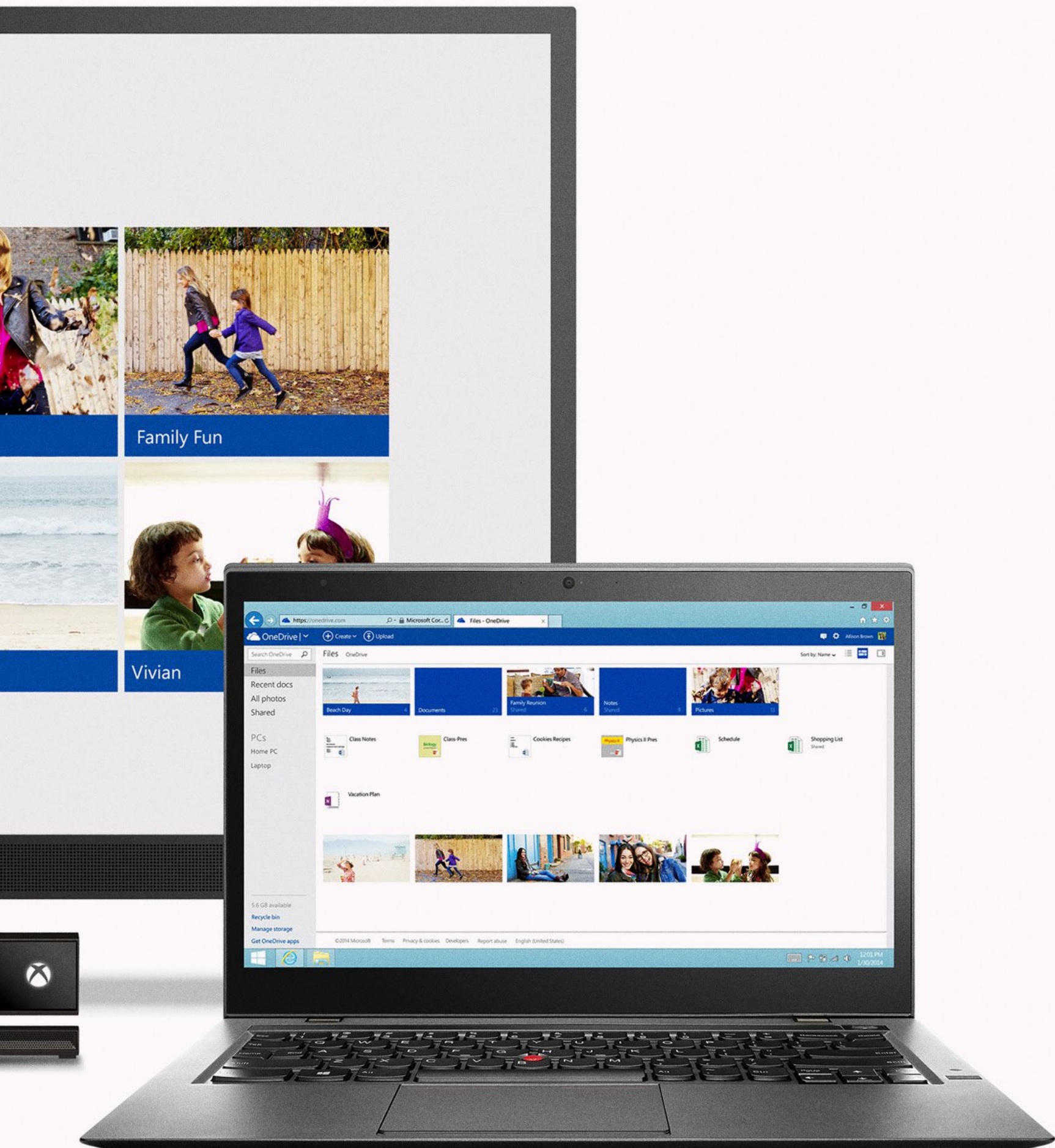




Image: Gary He

BRITISH POLICE ARREST 21-YEAR-OLD MAN IN VTECH HACKING

Police in the UK say they've made an arrest in the hacking of kids' technology maker VTech, which compromised the personal information of more than 6 million children around the world.

The South East Regional Organised Crime Unit, a regional task force made up of a handful of English police departments, says its cybercrime unit arrested a 21-year-old man was on hacking-related charges Tuesday morning in Bracknell, a town about 30 miles west of London.

Police seized a number of electronic items that will be examined by a cybercrime forensics unit.

Craig Jones, who heads the cybercrime unit, says in a statement that the investigation remains in its early stages and much work still needs to be done. Few other details were provided.

VTech officials didn't immediately return emails seeking comment.







The November hacking of Hong Kong-based VTech Holdings Ltd.'s Learning Lodge database compromised the profiles of 6.4 million kids around the world, along with the 4.9 million parent accounts that they were connected to.

News of the breach came just as the holiday shopping season was shifting into high gear. Kid-friendly tablets, smartwatches and other connected toys made by companies such as VTech are often high on the holiday wish lists of many children.

The company also has drawn fire in the weeks since the breach from some members of Congress who have demanded to know the details of how VTech collects and secures the personal information of children.

The information contained in the parental accounts included names, email addresses, secret questions and answers for password retrieval, numeric Internet Protocol addresses, mailing addresses, download histories and encrypted passwords.

Information in the children's accounts was restricted to names, ages and genders, the company says. But security experts warn that the stolen information could potentially be used to build profiles of children, potentially setting them up for identity theft or worse down the road.


The breach didn't expose any credit-card or other financial account information, as payments are handled by an outside company on a separate website, VTech says.

Some reports suggested that photos of children and chats between kids and their parents might also have been accessed, but VTech has yet to confirm that.



QUALCOMM

EXIT



QUALCOMM DECIDES AGAINST BREAKING ITSELF UP

Qualcomm says it has decided against splitting up the company.

The San Diego, California, chip maker says that it's completed its review of its operations and decided that it's best served by its current corporate and financial structure.

Qualcomm shares are up almost 3 percent in morning trading on the news.

Qualcomm Inc. announced the structural review in July, along with plans to slash its spending by \$1.4 billion and cut its workforce by 15 percent.

At the time, the company had been under intense pressure from Jana Partners, a major shareholder, to make changes. As part of the changes, Qualcomm immediately added two Jana picks to its board and said it would add a third later.

A smiling man with short grey hair, wearing a white lab coat, is the background of the page. A white heart rate line graphic runs horizontally across the top, with a red heart shape in the center. The word "Health" is written in white inside the red heart.

Health

WHO'S TOO
OLD FOR
MAJOR
TREATMENT?
AGE NOT
ALWAYS A
BARRIER



Irwin Weiner felt so good after heart surgery a few weeks before turning 90 that he stopped for a pastrami sandwich on the way home from the hospital. Dorothy Lipkin danced after getting a new hip at age 91. And at 94, William Gandin drives himself to the hospital for cancer treatments.

Jimmy Carter isn't the only nonagenarian to withstand rigorous medical treatment. Very old age is no longer an automatic barrier for aggressive therapies, from cancer care like the former president has received, to major heart procedures, joint replacements and even some organ transplants.

In many cases, the nation's most senior citizens are getting the same treatments given to people their grandchildren's age - but with different goals.

"Many elderly patients don't necessarily want a lot of years, what they want is quality of life," said Dr. Clifford Kavinsky, a heart specialist at Rush University Medical Center in Chicago. "They want whatever time is left for them to be high quality. They don't want to be dependent on their family. They don't want to end up in a nursing home."

Treatment for Carter, 91, has included surgery, radiation and a new cancer drug with fewer side effects than traditional chemotherapy. It seems to be working - Carter announced Dec. 6 that brain scans show no signs of the melanoma that was found in August.

The nation's 90-and-up population, about 2 million people, nearly tripled in recent decades, and the pace is expected to continue. Many are struggling with more than one age-related illness that make them poor candidates for



Image: Alan Diaz







aggressive and often costly care. But plenty remain robust enough to give it a try.

Lipkin, now 93, had hip replacement surgery two years ago in the Philadelphia area. Arthritis made walking difficult and painful. She'd been a good dancer in her younger days, and had tried to remain active, so her doctor recommended the operation.

"Otherwise I was going to be in a wheelchair the rest of my life," Lipkin said. Soon after, she made a video doing a line dance to show how well she was healing.

In the winter, she lives in Florida, walks at least half an hour daily and leads "a normal life."

Lipkin says having such major surgery at her age should be an individual decision.

Doctors agree. Some 90-year-olds are fitter than some 60-year-olds but they say other considerations need to be in the mix.

At MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston, the oldest patients are evaluated by geriatricians - specialists in medical care of the elderly - to make sure they're able to tolerate harsh treatments. Physical and mental health are assessed; so is social support - whether there are family members or friends available to help during treatment and recovery.

"We do believe that cancer care should not be limited by age," said Dr. Beatrice Edwards.

While many elderly patients are healthy enough to tolerate conventional treatments, advances including more targeted, less toxic drugs and minimally invasive surgery techniques are opening the door to others.





Gandin, the 94-year-old, was diagnosed more than 10 years ago with prostate cancer. Treatment with radiation and chemotherapy failed to stop cancer from spreading to his lungs and bones. He's now on hormone treatment that he said is controlling the disease.

A retired Exxon Mobil auditor, Gandin helps take care of his wife of 74 years in their assisted living home in Houston and is not ready to give up on treatment. "I'm an eternal optimist - that's what has carried me through," he said.

Weiner, a retired furniture manufacturer representative, had a hardened, leaky aortic valve - a common condition in the elderly that can lead to disability and death. Open-heart surgery is a common option for heart-valve surgery, but some doctors hesitate to perform it in the elderly, said Kavinsky, the Chicago heart specialist.

Dr. Joseph Lamelas, Weiner's surgeon at Mount Sinai Medical Center in Miami Beach, Florida, used a newer approach, implanting a new valve through a small incision on the right side of the chest.

After four days in the hospital last January, Weiner was back home in Boca Raton, Florida, and was well enough to have two big 90th birthday celebrations less than a month later.

Organ transplants are less common but not unheard of in the very old. Since 2013, there have been more than 100 kidney transplants in patients aged at least 80, including one in an 88-year-old, according to the United Network for Organ Sharing. Its records show that since 1987, the nation's oldest kidney transplant recipient was a 96-year-old.

There are generally no strict age limits on transplants. Dr. Dorry Segev, a Johns Hopkins Medicine transplant specialist, said frailty is a more important factor and his center measures it rigorously, including assessing patients' grip strength, walking speed and muscle mass.

Ethical issues complicate decisions on providing treatments costing tens of thousands of dollars to the very old and life expectancy has to be considered, Kavinsky said.

"When you start doing procedures on a 90-year old, you have someone who has already exceeded the average lifespan in America," he said. "How far should we go to keep them going?"

Dr. Joseph Dearani, chairman of cardiac surgery at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, said a good gauge is whether treatment would likely help patients live well for at least another two years.

He said costs to the patient, their family and society also should be weighed, so that treatment is given to right patients, and "for the most part, that happens."

Online:

National Institute on Aging: <https://www.nia.nih.gov/>



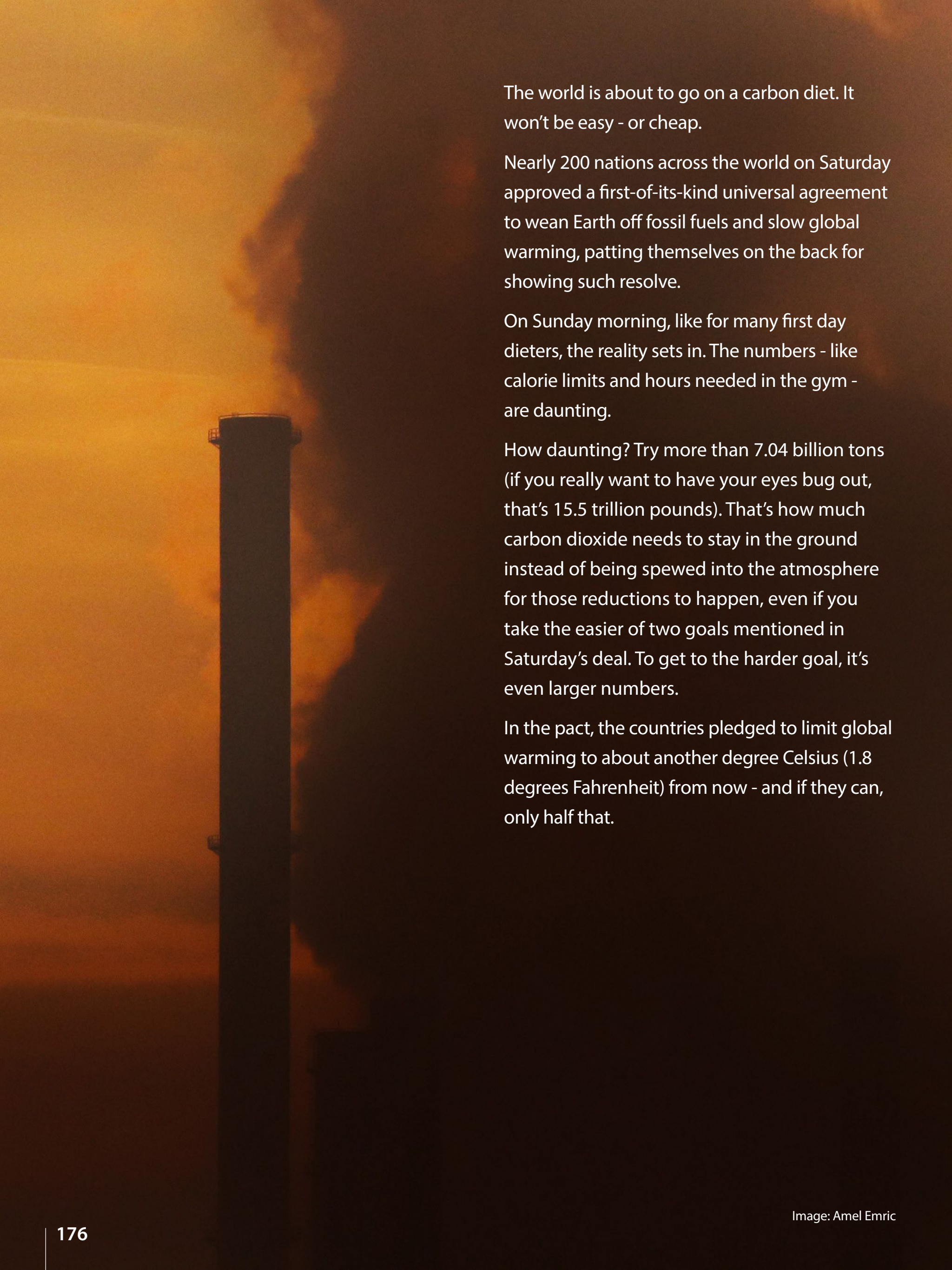


SCIENCE



The image is a full-page background photograph with a monochromatic orange-brown color scheme. It depicts a desolate landscape where two children are silhouetted against a hazy, orange sky. One child stands with hands on hips, while the other is bent over, possibly searching through debris on the ground. Numerous birds are scattered across the sky, some in flight and others perched. The ground is covered in dark, jagged rocks and what appears to be trash or debris.

NOW COMES
THE TOUGH
PART: THE
WORLD'S
CARBON DIET
STARTS



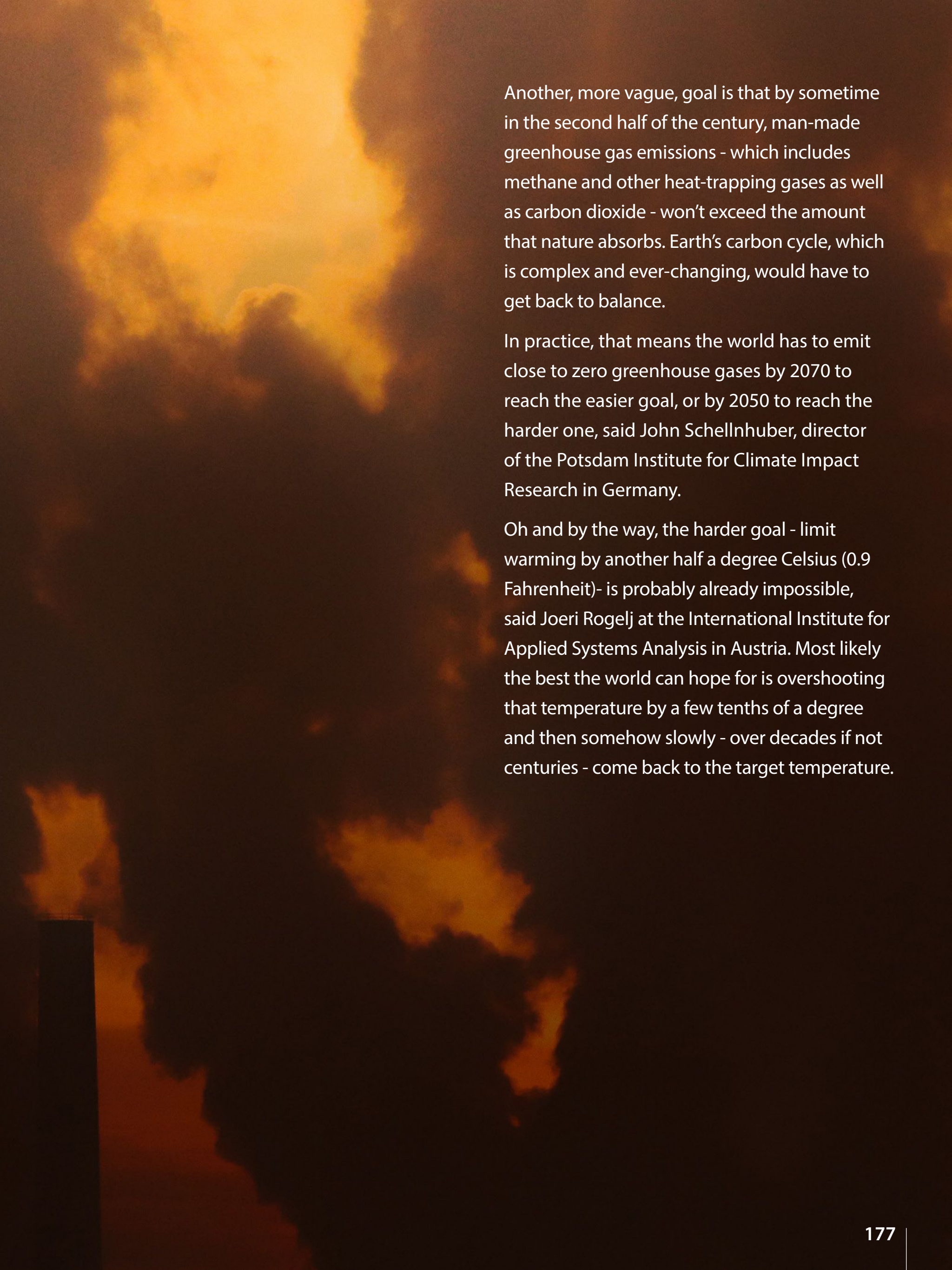
The world is about to go on a carbon diet. It won't be easy - or cheap.

Nearly 200 nations across the world on Saturday approved a first-of-its-kind universal agreement to wean Earth off fossil fuels and slow global warming, patting themselves on the back for showing such resolve.

On Sunday morning, like for many first day dieters, the reality sets in. The numbers - like calorie limits and hours needed in the gym - are daunting.

How daunting? Try more than 7.04 billion tons (if you really want to have your eyes bug out, that's 15.5 trillion pounds). That's how much carbon dioxide needs to stay in the ground instead of being spewed into the atmosphere for those reductions to happen, even if you take the easier of two goals mentioned in Saturday's deal. To get to the harder goal, it's even larger numbers.

In the pact, the countries pledged to limit global warming to about another degree Celsius (1.8 degrees Fahrenheit) from now - and if they can, only half that.



Another, more vague, goal is that by sometime in the second half of the century, man-made greenhouse gas emissions - which includes methane and other heat-trapping gases as well as carbon dioxide - won't exceed the amount that nature absorbs. Earth's carbon cycle, which is complex and ever-changing, would have to get back to balance.

In practice, that means the world has to emit close to zero greenhouse gases by 2070 to reach the easier goal, or by 2050 to reach the harder one, said John Schellnhuber, director of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research in Germany.

Oh and by the way, the harder goal - limit warming by another half a degree Celsius (0.9 Fahrenheit)- is probably already impossible, said Joeri Rogelj at the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis in Austria. Most likely the best the world can hope for is overshooting that temperature by a few tenths of a degree and then somehow slowly - over decades if not centuries - come back to the target temperature.



Image: Ng Han Guan



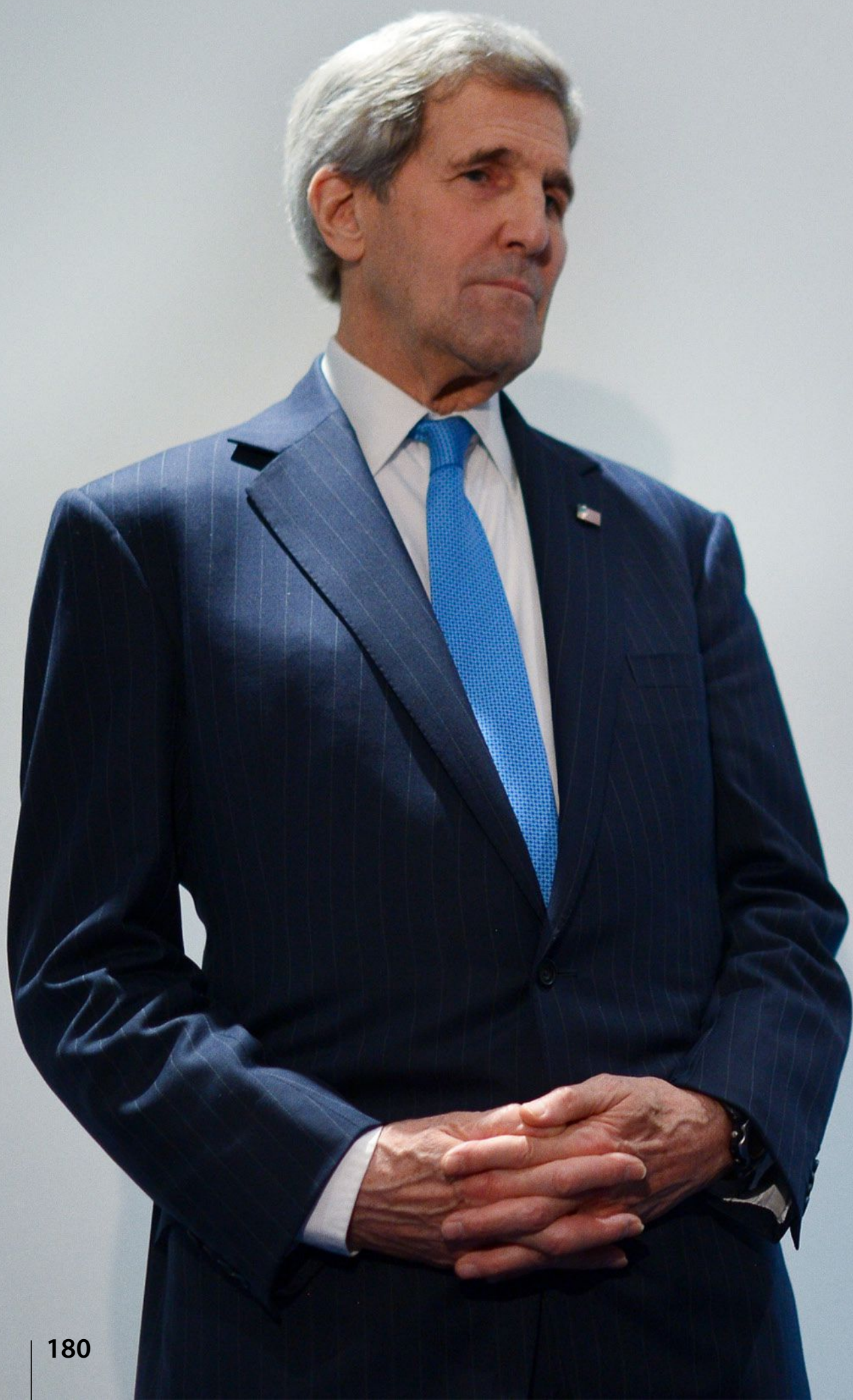
That may involve something called negative emissions. That's when the world - technology and nature combined - take out more carbon dioxide from the air than humanity puts in. Nearly 90 percent of scenarios of how to establish a safer temperature in the world involves going backward on emissions, but it is also so far not very realistic, said Kevin Anderson, deputy director of the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research in Britain.

Negative emissions involve more forests, maybe seeding the oceans, and possibly technology that sucks carbon out of the air and stores it underground somehow. More biomass or forests require enormous land areas and direct capture of carbon from air is expensive, but with a serious sustained research effort costs can probably be brought below \$100 per metric ton, said engineering and policy professor Granger Morgan of Carnegie Mellon University.

Leading up to the Paris Agreement, nearly every nation formed an individual action plan to cut or at least slow the growth of carbon pollution over the next decade or so. Richer nations that have already developed, like the United States, Europe and Japan, pledged to cut now. Developing nations that say they need fossil fuels to pull themselves out poverty pledged to slow the rate of growth for now, and to cut later.

"The EU and U.S. are all on Slim-Fast," said Paul Bledsoe, a former Clinton administration climate official. "China's still hitting fast food, but will have to stop soon."

China, the world's top carbon polluter, will eventually have to make the biggest cuts. Overall, for the world to hit its new target, global





carbon dioxide emissions will have to peak by 2030, maybe earlier, and then fall to near-zero, experts said. Those levels have been generally rising since the industrial revolution. A new study suggests emissions may have fallen slightly this year, but that may be a blip.

Without any efforts to limit global warming, the world would have warmed by 3.5 degrees Celsius (6.3 degrees Fahrenheit) from now by 2100, according to Climate Interactive. But China's submitted plan alone would cut that projected warming by 1.3 degrees, according to Climate Interactive. The U.S. plan trims about six tenths of a degree of the projected warming without a global deal.

And while China is now the No. 1 carbon dioxide polluter with more than a quarter of the world's emissions, carbon dioxide stays in the air for at least a century, so historical emissions are important. Since 1870, the U.S. is responsible for 18 percent of the world's carbon pollution, compared to 13 percent for China.

That all sounds good, but the goals the nations have set aren't enough. Taken together, they would still allow temperatures to rise 2.5 degrees Celsius (4.5 degrees Fahrenheit) by the end of the century from now, so to reach the goals agreed on this weekend countries will need to do more, Climate Interactive found.

Another climate modeling group, Climate Action Tracker, is slightly more optimistic, but still finds the nations' plans would miss the goal of limiting temperature rise to one more degree. It says the current proposals would allow a rise of 1.7 degrees Celsius (1.25 degrees Fahrenheit).

Countries agreed Saturday to take another look at their goals every five years.

"Clearly countries must be exercising their low-carbon muscles more," said Rachel Cleetus, climate policy manager for the Union of Concern Scientists.

French President Francois Hollande took the first step as he praised the Paris Agreement. He said France would ratchet up its goals and efforts earlier than required and challenged other nations to do the same.

"The world starts tomorrow" U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon told climate negotiators.

He said that Saturday.





PARIS2015
UN CLIMATE CHANGE CONFERENCE
COP21·CMP11







TOP 10 SONGS

HELLO

ADELE

SORRY

JUSTIN BIEBER

LOVE YOURSELF

JUSTIN BIEBER

HOTLINE BLING

DRAKE

SAME OLD LOVE

SELENA GOMEZ

DIE A HAPPY MAN

THOMAS RHETT

**LIKE I'M GONNA LOSE YOU
(FEAT. JOHN LEGEND)**

MEGHAN TRAINOR

EX'S & OH'S

ELLE KING

**SOMEBODY TO LOVE
(THE VOICE PERFORMANCE)**

JORDAN SMITH

WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

JUSTIN BIEBER





TOP 10 ALBUMS

25

ADELE

**THAT'S CHRISTMAS TO ME
(DELUXE EDITION)**

PENTATONIX

PURPOSE (DELUXE)

JUSTIN BIEBER

A HEAD FULL OF DREAMS

COLDPLAY

TRAVELLER

CHRIS STAPLETON

UNTAMED

CAM

CHRISTMAS

MICHAEL BUBLÉ

ULTIMATE SINATRA

FRANK SINATRA

21 CLASSIC CHRISTMAS FAVORITES

VARIOUS ARTISTS

THAT'S CHRISTMAS TO ME

PENTATONIX



OWN *TOP* 10 **MUSIC VIDEOS**

HELLO

ADELE

MARY, DID YOU KNOW?

PENTATONIX

HOTLINE BLING

DRAKE

WATCH ME (WHIP / NAE NAE)

SILENTÓ

DADDY (FEAT. CL)

PSY

SORRY

JUSTIN BIEBER

WILDEST DREAMS

TAYLOR SWIFT

UPTOWN FUNK (FEAT. BRUNO MARS)

MARK RONSON

FOCUS

ARIANA GRANDE

THE SOUND OF SILENCE

DISTURBED





TOP 10 TV SHOWS

SHE WANTS REVENGE

AMERICAN HORROR STORY: HOTEL, SEASON 5

THE EARWORM REVERBERATION

THE BIG BANG THEORY, SEASON 9

WHITE CHRISTMAS

MODERN FAMILY, SEASON 7

THE GAMES UNDERFOOT

ELEMENTARY, SEASON 4

CIAO, TUSCANY!

THE REAL HOUSEWIVES OF BEVERLY HILLS, SEASON 6

WESEN NACHT

GRIMM, SEASON 5

FLAGS OF OUR FATHERS

BLUE BLOODS, SEASON 6

KA MAKAU KAA KAUA

HAWAII FIVE-0, SEASON 6

COLD AS ICE

THE VAMPIRE DIARIES, SEASON 7

DARK WATERS

ARROW, SEASON 4





TOP 10 BOOKS

50 CHILDREN

STEVEN PRESSMAN

THE GUILTY

DAVID BALDACCI

THE GIRL ON THE TRAIN

PAULA HAWKINS

TOM CLANCY COMMANDER IN CHIEF

MARK GREANEY

CROSS JUSTICE

JAMES PATTERSON

ROGUE LAWYER

JOHN GRISHAM

THE NIGHTINGALE

KRISTIN HANNAH

FUELED

K. BROMBERG

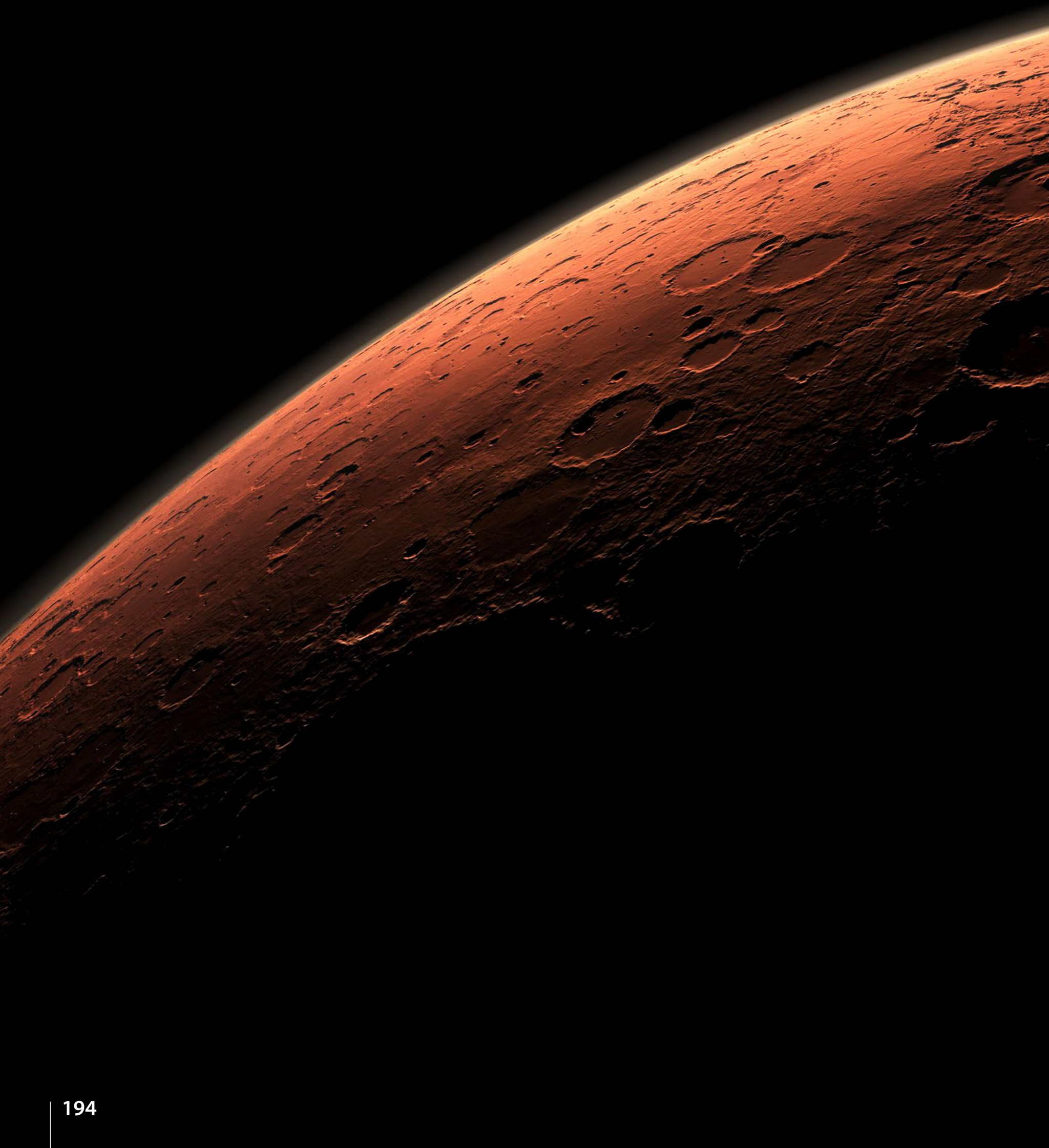
ARCHIE AND AMELIE

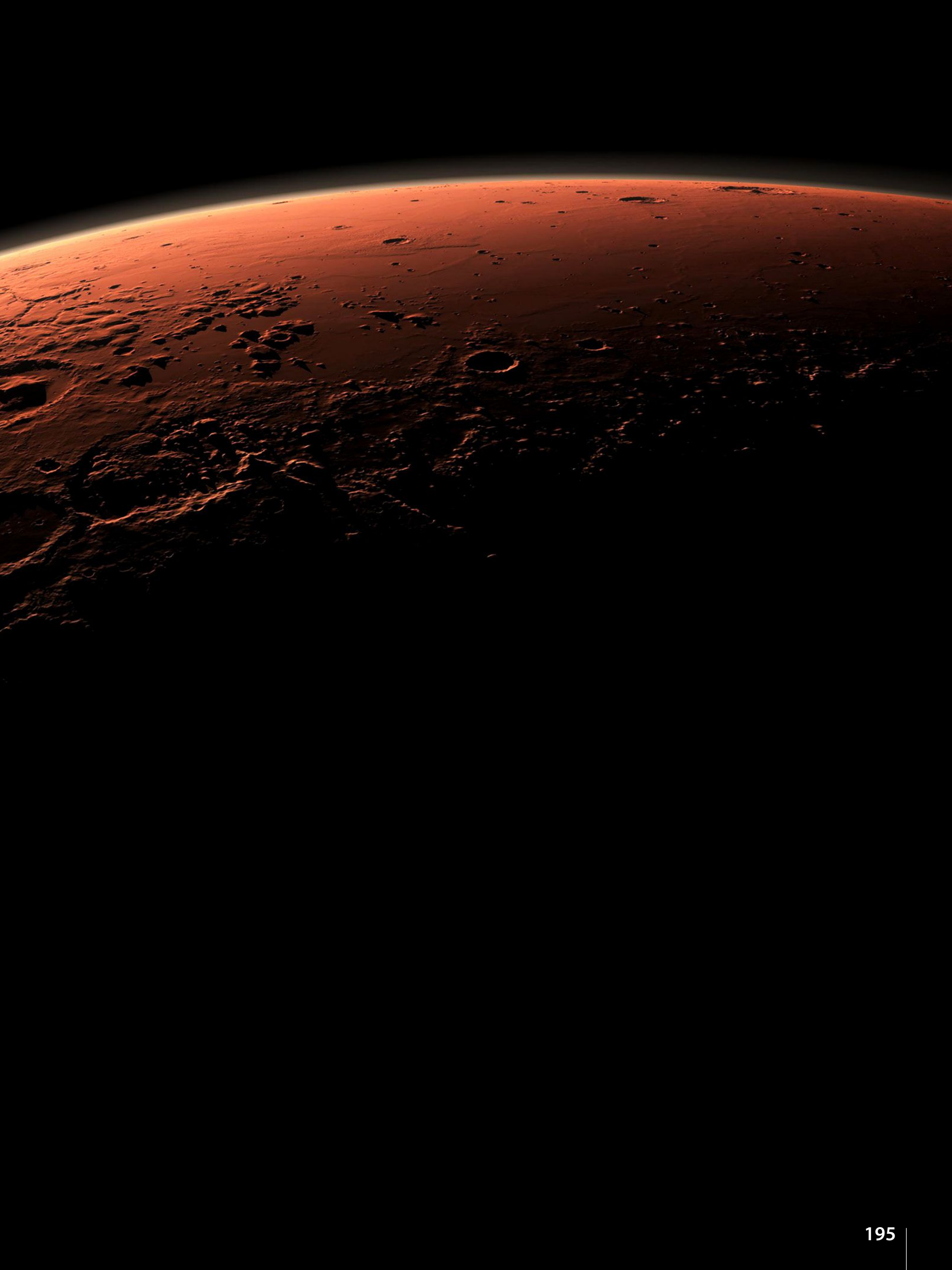
DONNA M. LUCEY

ASHLEY BELL

DEAN KOONTZ

NASA WANT AD: ASTRONAUTS NEEDED TO HELP GET TO MARS





Need more office space? How about outer space?

NASA opened its astronaut-application website Monday. It's accepting applications through Feb. 18.

Contenders need to be U.S. citizens with a bachelor's degree in science, math or engineering. Expect intense competition: More than 6,000 applied for NASA's last astronaut class in 2013, with only eight picked. It's an elite club, numbering only in the 300s since the original Mercury 7 chosen in 1959.

Future astronauts will have four spacecraft at their disposal: the International Space Station, two commercial crew capsules to get there, and NASA's Orion spacecraft for eventual Mars trips. Pay is between \$66,000 and \$145,000 a year, and you'll have to move to Houston.

Astronaut criteria have changed over the years, said Brian Kelly, director of flight operations at Johnson Space Center.

"Some people would be surprised to learn they might have what it takes," Kelly said in a statement. "We want and need a diverse mix of individuals to ensure we have the best astronaut corps possible."

NASA Administrator Charles Bolden, a member of the Astronaut Class of 1980, said this next group will help "blaze the trail" to Mars.

Online:

NASA: <http://www.jsc.nasa.gov/Bios/>







Image: Brent Lewin

SAMSUNG ASKS SUPREME COURT TO THROW OUT \$399M JUDGMENT

In its patent dispute with Apple, Samsung is asking the Supreme Court to take a digital-age look at an issue it last confronted in the horse-and-buggy era.

South Korea-based Samsung on Monday appealed a \$399 million judgment for illegally copying patented aspects of the look of Apple's iPhone, the latest round in a long-running fight between the two tech-industry giants.

The last time the Supreme Court heard cases on patents covering the appearance of a product instead of the way it works was in the late 1800s, when the court battles concerned designs of spoon handles, carpets and saddles.

The smartphone is fast becoming as common a possession as those items were in the Victorian age. Nearly two-thirds of Americans own a smartphone, the Pew Research Center said in April, up from about a third just four years earlier. Apple and Samsung are the top two manufacturers of smartphones.





None of the earlier-generation Galaxy and other Samsung phones involved in the lawsuit remains on the market, Samsung said.

The company's appeal raises two issues at the Supreme Court, arguing that the lower-court ruling upholding the judgment "overprotects and overcompensates" Apple's patents.

One question is how juries should value the common features for which Apple holds patents: the flat screen, the rectangular shape with rounded corners, a rim and a screen of icons. Samsung said the jury in this case had too much freedom to look at the overall appearance of the phones, rather than focus on those three elements.

The other issue at the Supreme Court is whether a court can order Samsung to pay Apple every penny it made from the phones at issue when the disputed features are a tiny part of the product.

The federal appeals court in Washington that hears patent cases ruled for Apple on both counts.

"Samsung is escalating this case because it believes that the way the laws were interpreted is not in line with modern times," Samsung said in a statement that accompanied its Supreme Court appeal.

Apple spokeswoman Rachel Tulley said the case is about more than patents and money. "We make these products to delight our customers, not for our competitors to flagrantly copy," Tulley said.

The Supreme Court could decide early next year whether to hear the case, but arguments would not take place before the fall of 2016.





The legal battles between Apple and Samsung have cooled recently, but this case could attract the justices' interest, said Michael Carrier, a professor at Rutgers Law School in Camden, New Jersey, who has followed the lawsuits closely.

One study found 250,000 patents in a smartphone, Carrier said. "In a world in which there can be thousands of patents in a particular product, it does not seem appropriate to award all of the profits to patents making up only a fraction of the contributions to the product," Carrier said.

Samsung is not challenging the design patents themselves at the Supreme Court, although the Patent and Trademark Office has issued a preliminary ruling against Apple's design patent for the flat surface of its iPhone.

Samsung already has handed the \$399 million over to Apple and could seek a refund if the patent decision stands or the Supreme Court rules in its favor.

Even as Apple won court judgments backing its claims that its patents were infringed, it was not able to persuade courts to order Samsung to stop selling the products.

That's one possible explanation for why the legal dispute between Apple and Samsung appears to be winding down, said Michael Risch, an expert on intellectual property at Villanova University law school.

"Or perhaps the money it won was the price it wanted to exact, or it could be that Samsung changed the look of its products enough," Risch said.

The image is a complex, overlapping collage of numerous Apple Magazine covers, creating a mosaic-like effect. The covers are arranged in a way that they appear to be floating or layered on top of each other, with some covers partially obscured by others. The Apple logo is a central motif, appearing on many of the covers. The headlines on the covers are diverse, covering topics such as:

- WWDC 2012:** "A Bevy of Innovative Updates", "iOS BRINGS ENTERTAINMENT ON THE ROAD", "ETIQUETTE CIVILITY AND THE PERSONAL COMMUNICATIONS DEVICE".
- iPhone 5:** "HIGH 5: THE MOST ANTICIPATED GADGET OF ALL TIME", "DISTINCTIVE, ALLURING, COVERED".
- iPad mini:** "CORE iPad mini MOVEMENTS FINALLY REVEALED".
- Angry Birds Star Wars:** "ANGRY BIRDS STAR WARS".
- The New iMac:** "The New iMac APPLE UNVEILS A NEW MODERNIZED DESKTOP".
- Windows 8:** "Windows 8 The Mosaic of Microsoft".
- Other headlines:** "STEVE JOBS", "THE BIG NEXT PLAYER SHUTTERBUGS", "LOCK DOWN", "Purs Flashback Java Virus", "OUTSOURCED", "MOUNTAIN LION", "KID DEVELOPERS", "IPAD", "MAC", "PORTABLE TELEVISION", "AT THE MOVIES", "POWER ON", "MAKING PODCASTS COOL AGAIN", "LONDON 2012", "ACTIVIST", "THE BLUEPRINT OF LIFE", "SAMSUNG vs APPLE", "THE EFFECT OF iOS & FACEBOOK ON", "THE BIG NEXT PLAYER SHUTTERBUGS", "THE BLUEPRINT OF LIFE", "SAMSUNG vs APPLE", "THE EFFECT OF iOS & FACEBOOK ON", "THE BIG NEXT PLAYER SHUTTERBUGS", "THE BLUEPRINT OF LIFE", "SAMSUNG vs APPLE", "THE EFFECT OF iOS & FACEBOOK ON".

The overall composition is vibrant and dynamic, with a variety of colors and fonts used across the different covers. The Apple logo is consistently white or silver, standing out against the various backgrounds of the covers. The collage suggests a rich history and diverse content of Apple Magazine, spanning different product lines and events.

It's all about Apple

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